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HISTORY of WAR

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Helmand veteran interview

FUTURE
ISSUE 096

80 YEARS OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SPECIAL FORCES

SAS

WHO DARES WINS

TOUGHEST MISSIONS
From D-Day to the 1980 Embassy Siege

"GREATEST ESCAPES"
Damien Lewis on daring WWII operations

1 MAN vs 2 PANZERS
Medal of Honor heroism in 1944

PALESTINE WAR 1947
Roots of bloodshed in the Holy Land

GATO SUBMARINE
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During the Vietnam War almost 60,000 Australian servicemen, both regular and *'national service'* fought there. Deployed alongside them was an eclectic combination of vehicles, tanks, artillery and all kinds of military hardware essential for a modern army to be an effective fighting force in the field.

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When it comes to 1:30 scale model, military miniatures depicting the Australian Army in action no other company compares to **King & Country**... *for quality, variety and... value for money.*

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VN097 is the *'Military Police'* version complete with a seated MP driver and a fully-fitted canvas cover. Standing next to this vehicle is VN092, two *Australian Military* Policemen with their checkpoint sign.

VN118 is the second Land Rover, the *'Patrol/General Service'* model and comes open-topped with a seated Army driver.

To accompany this vehicle is VN125 the ***Land Rover Passenger Set,*** three sitting *Royal Australian Regiment* riflemen in suitable poses.

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Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2861 3450
E-mail: sales@kingandcountry.com

MAGPIE
1 High Street, Evesham
Worcestershire, WR11 4DA. England UK
Tel: 01386 41631
eBay shop: Manchester House Collectables
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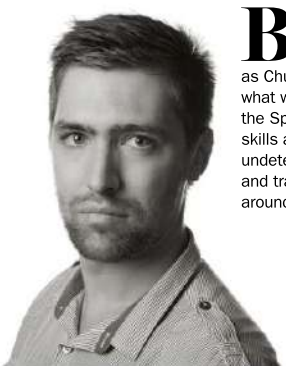
Above: SAS troops displayed their formidable skills as they stormed the Iranian Embassy in London to rescue hostages

Welcome



By 1941 Britain had overcome the threat of imminent invasion and was setting about taking the fight back to the Axis powers. While the Special Operations Executive "set Europe ablaze", as Churchill put it, in North Africa a young officer was formulating what would prove to be the world's first modern special forces unit: the Special Air Service. This group of men were hand-picked for their skills and daring, and were trained to hit fast and hard while moving undetected in the harsh desert environment. They formed the blueprints and traditions upon which the modern SAS and many other elite forces around the world have been built.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

DAMIEN LEWIS

Damien is a former foreign correspondent and now a bestselling author, with several books on the history of the SAS. Over on page 32 he shares two incredible WWII stories of escape and survival behind enemy lines in France and Italy.

WILLIAM WELSH

The Battle of Jaffa (1192) was the final clash of the Third Crusade, in which a Crusader army under Richard I 'The Lionheart' marched to seize Jerusalem from Saladin's forces. On page 42 William recounts the battle blow-by-blow.

CAPTAIN KAILASH LIMBU

An Afghanistan veteran with the Royal Gurkha Rifles, Captain Limbu spoke with History of War about his journey from Nepal to the UK, his training, and his experience fighting the Taliban in Helmand (p.52).

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In 1944 this sergeant led his men against terrible odds in the Vosges Mountains

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The Crusader forces of Richard I marched to seize Jerusalem from Saladin's army

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WAR in FOCUS

SHOOTING STARS OVER KOREA

Taken c.1950

US Air Force F-80C jet fighters fly in formation during the Korean War. Designed by Lockheed during the tail-end of the Second World War, the F-80C was nicknamed the Shooting Star due to its speed, being the first USAF aircraft to exceed 800kph. The jet first saw combat during the Korean War, where it was utilised in a fighter-bomber role, armed with rockets and napalm to carry out low-level attacks on ground targets.

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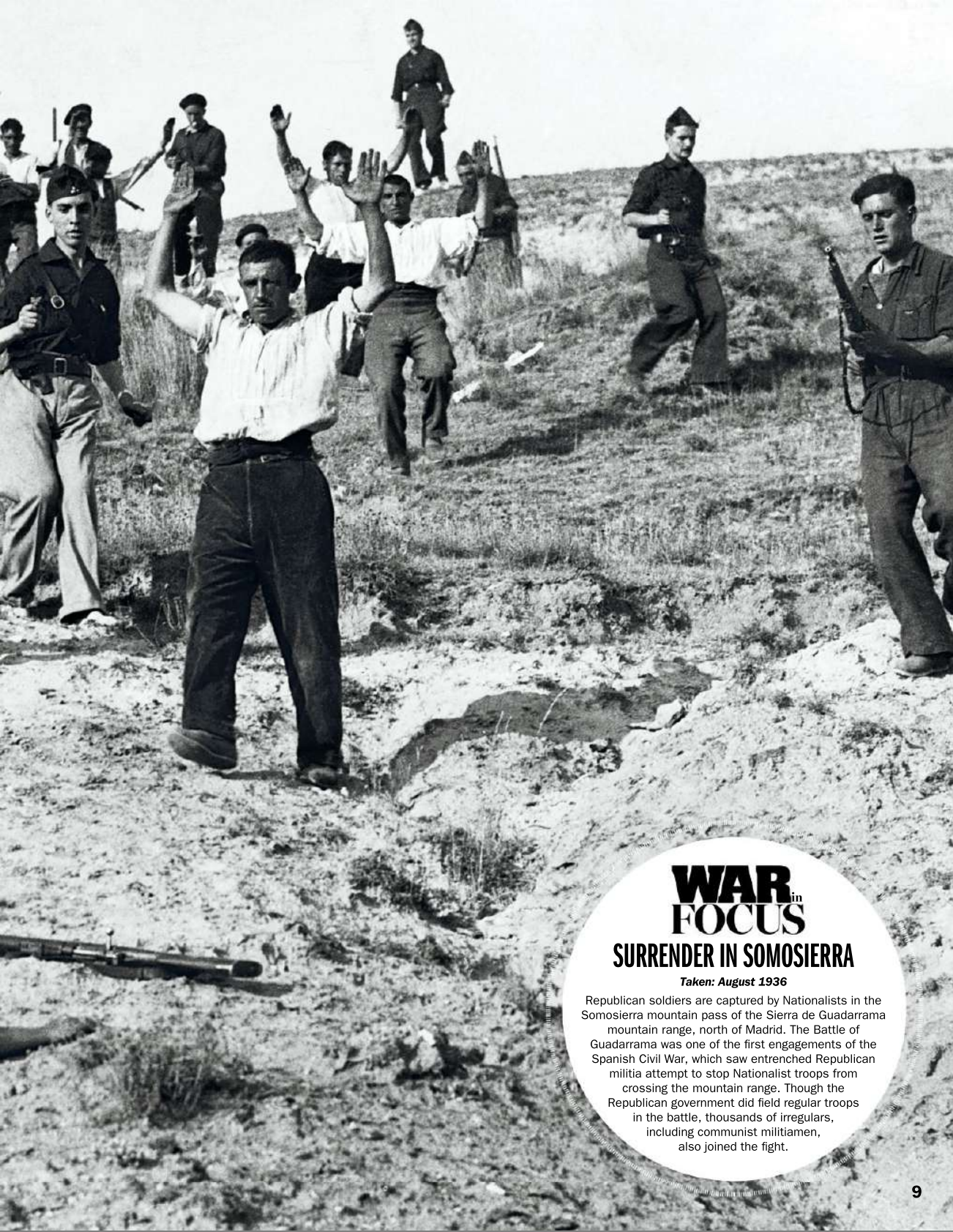


WAR in FOCUS

SURRENDER IN SOMOSIERRA

Taken: August 1936

Republican soldiers are captured by Nationalists in the Somosierra mountain pass of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range, north of Madrid. The Battle of Guadarrama was one of the first engagements of the Spanish Civil War, which saw entrenched Republican militia attempt to stop Nationalist troops from crossing the mountain range. Though the Republican government did field regular troops in the battle, thousands of irregulars, including communist militiamen, also joined the fight.

WAR in FOCUS

FOREIGN LEGION TEST FIRE

Taken: November, 1990

French Foreign Legion troops conduct live firing exercises in Saudi Arabia, in preparation for the intervention in Iraq, during the Gulf War. French participation in the war was named Opération Daguet, launched on 23 September and comprising a force of approximately 16,000. Among the French contingent were several regiments of the Foreign Legion (Légion étrangère), including the 2nd Foreign Infantry Regiment, members of which are shown here training with an LRAC anti-tank weapon and FAMAS machine guns.

TIMELINE OF THE...

PALESTINE WAR

In the years following the Second World War, bitter fighting erupts between Jews and Arabs in two overlapping conflicts, involving mass killings, a refugee crisis and the founding of a new state

2 November 1917

BALFOUR DECLARATION

British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour writes a public statement during WWI to advocate a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. The declaration greatly increases international support for Zionism and is considered a primary cause of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

1920-48

MANDATORY PALESTINE

Britain governs Palestine under a League of Nations Mandate following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Nationalist movements rise in both Jewish and Arab communities during Mandatory rule. Jewish immigration also increases, especially after the Holocaust.

British rule in Palestine effectively begins during WWI when General Edmund Allenby captures Jerusalem from Ottoman forces in December 1917

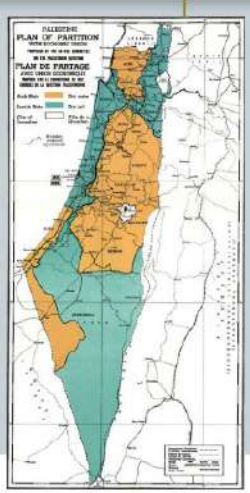
© Getty

29 November 1947

UN PARTITION PLAN

When Britain announces its termination of the Mandate government, the United Nations partitions Palestine. The region is split into two states – Jewish and Arab – with Jerusalem to be internationally administered. Despite the partition, the UN recommends that both states be joined in economic union.

The original UN plan for the partition of Palestine. The Jewish state is coloured green, the Arab state in yellow, while the internationally governed Jerusalem is in neutral white



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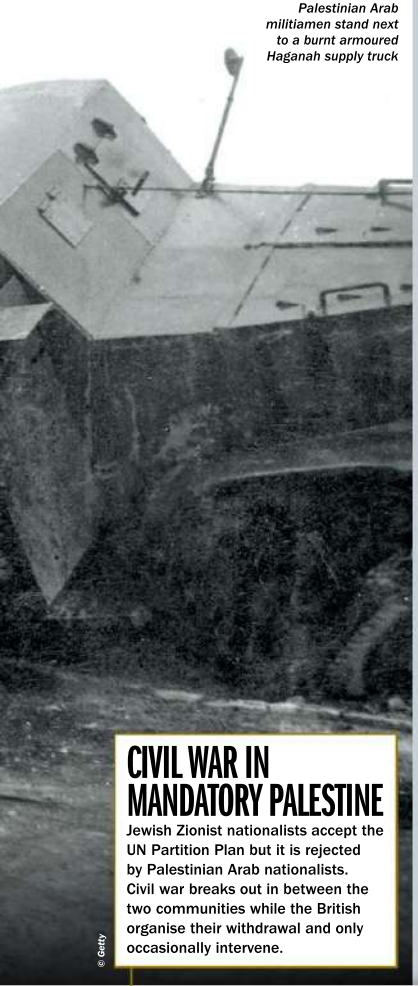

Palestinian Arab militiamen stand next to a burnt armoured Haganah supply truck

© Getty

CIVIL WAR IN MANDATORY PALESTINE

Jewish Zionist nationalists accept the UN Partition Plan but it is rejected by Palestinian Arab nationalists. Civil war breaks out in between the two communities while the British organise their withdrawal and only occasionally intervene.

30 November 1947 – 14 May 1948

BATTLE FOR JERUSALEM 01

Although it's meant to be internationally administered, fighting breaks out in Jerusalem between Jewish and Arab militias. The Jewish community is cut off by Arab forces, including from Transjordan (now Jordan) and Egypt. Control of the city is eventually split between Israel and Transjordan.

Arab Legion artillery shells Jewish Haganah positions at Jerusalem

© Getty

December 1947 – 18 July 1948

© Getty

OPERATION NACHSHON

Haganah launches a major operation to break the Siege of Jerusalem by opening the blockaded Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road. Arab forces fight back fiercely and although Jewish supply convoys reach the city the road is blocked once again.

A Jewish supply convoy arrives in Jerusalem during the siege

5-16 April 1948

March 1948

PLAN DALET

Zionist military and political leaders devise a plan to declare a Jewish state and to defend its borders and people. The plan is controversial because its aims purportedly include conquering Arab settlements along the new border, expelling the local populations and repopulating them with Jewish settlers.

Historians disagree on whether Plan Dalet effectively calls for ethnic cleansing or is a mostly defensive scheme

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4-15 April 1948

BATTLE OF MISHMAR HAEMEK 02

The Arab Liberation Army attacks the strategically important kibbutz of Mishmar HaEmek. This prompts a Jewish counteroffensive from the paramilitary group Haganah. The Arabs are defeated, with the battle contributing the fall of Haifa to Jewish forces.

Jewish female militia volunteers train at Mishmar HaEmek

© Alamy

DEIR YASSIN MASSACRE 03

Over 100 Palestinian Arabs (including women and children) are killed at the village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem by Jewish militias. The massacre is condemned by Haganah and the Jewish political class but Deir Yassin becomes symbolic of the suffering of Palestinian Arabs.

9 April 1948

14 May 1948

***Top, right:** An Arab demonstrator invokes the memory of the Deir Yassin Massacre at a protest in Canada, 20 March 1967*

***Right:** David Ben-Gurion, who later became the first prime minister of Israel, reads out the declaration of independence in Tel Aviv Museum*

ISRAELI DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE 04

When the British Mandate over Palestine expires, the Jewish Agency for Palestine declares the formal independence of the state of Israel in Tel Aviv Museum. The new country is recognised by both the USA and Soviet Union within a few days.

© Alamy

ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

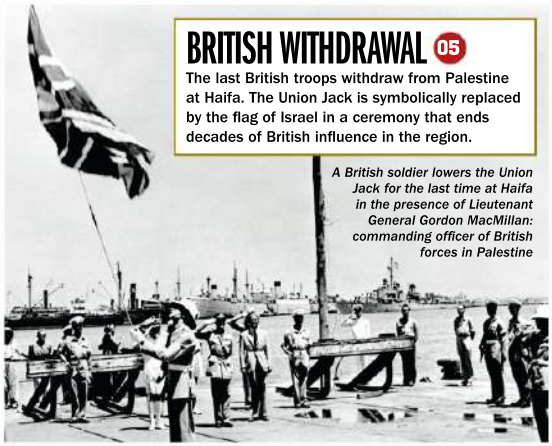
The civil war between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine transforms into a multinational conflict the day after Israel declares independence. A new Arab League of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and other Arabic expeditionary forces immediately attacks Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlements.

A mounted rifleman from the Arab Legion (Transjordan's regular army) poses during the Arab-Israeli War

© Alamy

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL 05

The last British troops withdraw from Palestine at Haifa. The Union Jack is symbolically replaced by the flag of Israel in a ceremony that ends decades of British influence in the region.



A British soldier lowers the Union Jack for the last time at Haifa in the presence of Lieutenant General Gordon MacMillan: commanding officer of British forces in Palestine

© Getty

OPERATION YOAV 06

Israeli troops fight in the Negev Desert to conquer the region and disrupt Egyptian forces. A series of military operations (including naval engagements) occur that includes the capture of Beersheba and many Arab settlements.

Israeli soldiers pictured advancing through Beersheba as they capture the city

© Alamy

15 May 1948 – 10 March 1949

30 June 1948

15-22 October 1948

1948

5-10 March 1949

AL NAKBA

At least 750,000 Palestinian Arabs from a population of 1.9 million are made refugees during and after the creation of Israel. Seventy-eight percent of historic Palestine is captured by Zionist-Israeli forces during 1947-49, with 1948 being the peak year of displacements. Over 500 settlements are destroyed and around 15,000 Palestinians are killed. Palestinians call the event Al Nakba (The Catastrophe).

A Palestinian Arab pictured in front of a makeshift camp for refugees

OPERATION UVDA 07

Israeli forces capture the southern Negev Desert in the last operation of the Arab-Israeli War. The overall Palestine War also ends with an Israeli victory that captures 60 percent of the territory allotted to the Palestinian Arabs by the UN. Israel's sovereignty is secured but regional instability continues unabated into the 21st century.

Captain Avraham Adan raises a handmade Israeli 'Ink Flag' after capturing the Jordanian outpost of Umm Rashrash, 10 March 1949

© Getty

BATTLE FOR JERUSALEM

The summer of 1948 saw the Arabs gain the upper hand during several clashes for the holy city, which was supposed to be a neutral space

Years before the 1948 war, gunfire and terrorist bombings made life nearly unbearable in Jerusalem. The situation was worsened by British efforts at halting Jewish immigration to Palestine and the unrest this triggered between Arabs and Jews. In 1946 the Zionists blew up the east wing of the King David Hotel as retribution for British police tactics. The ensuing civil war meant Haganah and its extremist allies in LAHI, also known as the Irgun, got swept up in never-ending reprisals against their chosen foes: the occupying British and the belligerent Arabs.

Matters were unresolved on the cusp of Israel's independence. Two weeks after Prime Minister David Ben Gurion's radio message declaring the creation of a Jewish state on 15 May, the Jordanian Arab Legion completed its encirclement of Jerusalem – Arab militias aided the Legion when they blocked the roads, cutting off 100,000 Jewish residents. This action went against the United Nations' painstakingly crafted Resolution 181 calling for separate Jewish and Arab homelands with Jerusalem governed as a neutral territory.

At the end of May the Arab Legion controlled the Old City encompassing the Temple Mount, upon which stood the sacred Al Aqsa mosque and the adjacent Dome of the Rock, along with the Wailing Wall below. All the important religious sites, whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, were under the Legion's guns as well. The few Israeli forces still inside Jerusalem could not hold out for long against the Arab Legion and thousands of enemy militia.

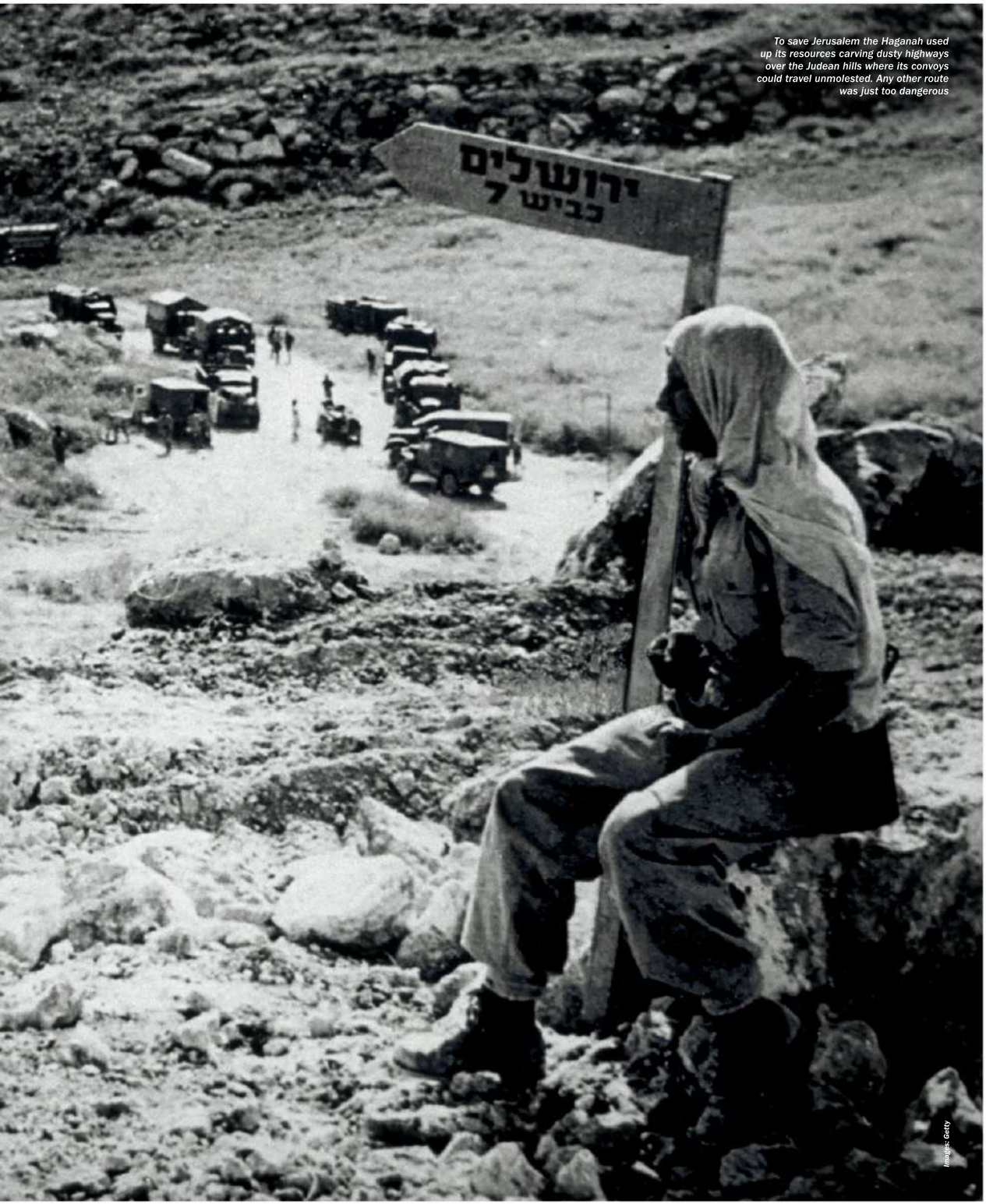
Before starvation could take its toll on Jerusalem's besieged residents, the Haganah launched a novel strategy to break the Arab stranglehold. With a sizable motor pool at its disposal a new route to the city was planned. The timing was a matter of life and death since the Palmach, for all their training, could not dislodge the Arabs holding the Latrun fortress that guarded the single highway connecting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In circumstances so ridiculous if not for their necessity, a team of Jewish scouts risked their lives on a trek finding a usable course over dirt paths and rugged hillsides in the Judean country. Evoking one of the Second World War's more impressive logistical feats, the so-called 'Burma Road' was little more than a trail hastily carved out to fit so many trucks in short notice. Engineers spent weeks gouging and flattening a usable track for the convoys that saved the city's Jewish residents in the middle of June. The plan worked and, remarkably, Arab forces did little to obstruct the operation.

What the Haganah, led by Colonel Moshe Dayan, did not count on was for the Arab Legion to beat them in urban combat. Months of house-to-house fighting that endangered heritage sites and ancient monuments resulted in no credible gains until a ceasefire ended the war in March 1949. Revisionist accounts of the battle for Jerusalem still echo the biblical showdown between David and Goliath, except the roles are switched depending on the perspective. The Israel Defence Forces' own history remembers it as a desperate tit-for-tat that pushed the beleaguered Haganah to its limits. The Jordanians and Palestinians, on the other hand, tend to exaggerate the strength of the Haganah and how well-equipped it was.

What is often lost in the retelling is how the Arab Legion had enough armoured cars and howitzers to block the Israeli counter-attacks around the Old City – an advantage that disappeared in the following decade. The Haganah at the time simply did not have the right equipment for large-scale conventional war. Two decades later the tables had turned. When Jerusalem's Old City was seized by the IDF in the Six Day War of 1967, the Arabs, along with the rest of the Muslim world, bemoaned the defeat and still evoke the symbolic importance of an occupied Al Aqsa mosque as a nationalist rallying cry. Meanwhile, the events of 1967 are seen as a turning point in more than 2,000 years of Jewish history.

Even before independence the Yishuv, or the Jewish nation residing in Palestine, showed it had the essential building block for a state: a standing army under a national flag

Terrorism became an epidemic in the final years of Mandatory Palestine. The Atlantic Hotel bombing orchestrated by Arab militants triggered anti-British riots by Jewish residents



To save Jerusalem the Haganah used up its resources carving dusty highways over the Judean hills where its convoys could travel unmolested. Any other route was just too dangerous

Images: Getty

HEROES & LEADERS

The conflict over Palestine was led by multinational, multi-talented men who were soldiers, politicians, writers, biochemists and archaeologists

DAVID BEN-GURION

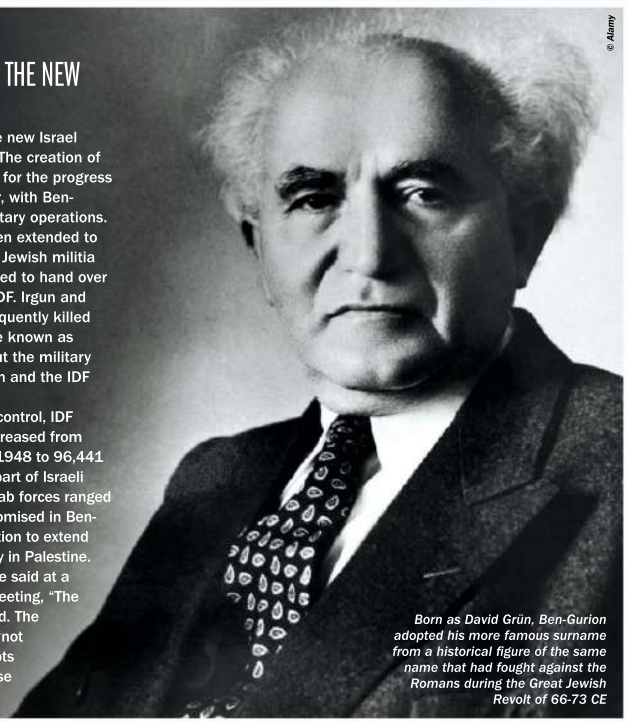
THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL WHO FOUNDED THE NEW COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES 1886-1973 ISRAEL

Born in Poland, which was the part of the Russian Empire, Ben-Gurion's father was an ardent Zionist. As a teenager, Ben-Gurion led his own Zionist group, and immigrated to Palestine in 1906. During his early years in Palestine, he was involved in the creation of the first agricultural workers commune (which evolved into the 'kibbutz') and established a Jewish self-defence group called 'Hashomer' ('The Watchmen').

During WWI, Ben-Gurion was deported by the Ottoman Empire and campaigned for Zionism in the United States. He then fought for the British Army in Palestine as part of the newly formed Jewish Legion. Rising through the ranks of Jewish Palestinian politics during the interwar years, Ben-Gurion was elected as chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel in 1935.

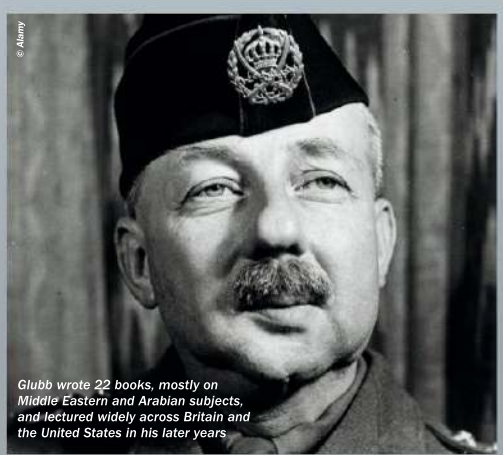
Ben-Gurion was crucial in unifying various Jewish groups to advocate for a Jewish state in Palestine to the UN after WWII. When Israel was founded in 1948, he became 'Chairman of the Provisional State Council' (effectively prime minister), and organised all Jewish militias into the new Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The creation of the IDF was important for the progress of the Arab-Israeli War, with Ben-Gurion overseeing military operations. His firm leadership even extended to clamping down on the Jewish militia group Irgun, who refused to hand over their weapons to the IDF. Irgun and IDF troops were subsequently killed in a clash that became known as the 'Altalena Affair', but the military authority of Ben-Gurion and the IDF was confirmed.

Under Ben-Gurion's control, IDF personnel numbers increased from 35,000 troops in May 1948 to 96,441 by December. A large part of Israeli success against the Arab forces ranged against them was epitomised in Ben-Gurion's ruthless ambition to extend the new state's territory in Palestine. On 7 February 1948, he said at a Mapai Party Council meeting, "The war will give us the land. The concepts of 'ours' and 'not ours' are peace concepts only and in war they lose their whole meaning."



© Alamy

Born as David Grün, Ben-Gurion adopted his more famous surname from a historical figure of the same name that had fought against the Romans during the Great Jewish Revolt of 66-73 CE



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Glubb wrote 22 books, mostly on Middle Eastern and Arabian subjects, and lectured widely across Britain and the United States in his later years

SIR JOHN BAGOT GLUBB

THE BRITISH COMMANDER OF THE ARAB LEGION DURING THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR 1897-1986 BRITAIN-TRANSJORDAN

A British Army officer from Lancashire, England, Glubb was awarded the Military Cross in France during WWI. After being posted to Mesopotamia in 1920, he developed a great interest in the Arabs, and trained Bedouin police forces in Iraq and Transjordan. In 1939, he was appointed the commander of the Arab Legion – Transjordan's regular army. His forces fought alongside the British in Syria and Iraq during WWII, including the capture of Baghdad in 1941.

In May 1948, Glubb and the Arab Legion occupied the West Bank territory in Palestine as part of the UN Partition Plan. The Legion was considered the strongest Arab force that fought the Israelis, and was involved in severe fighting at Jerusalem and Latrun, among other places. Glubb continued to defend the West Bank after the armistice of 1949, and commanded the Arab Legion until 1956. He was knighted upon his return to Britain.

"THE LEGION WAS CONSIDERED THE STRONGEST ARAB FORCE THAT FOUGHT THE ISRAELIS"

HABIS MAJALI

THE BEDOUIN OFFICER WHO DEFEATED THE ISRAELI FORCES AT LATRUN

1914-2001 **TRANSJORDAN**

Born in the city of Ma'an in what is now southern Jordan, Majali joined the Kingdom of Transjordan's Arab Legion in 1932. Brave and canny, he impressed John Bagot Glubb, the commander of Transjordan's armed forces, and was a lieutenant colonel by 1948. Although the Arab Legion was founded in 1920, it took over 20 years before Majali became the first Arab commander of one of the Legion's regiments.

In this capacity, he commanded the Legion's 4th Regiment during the Arab-Israeli War. During the battles for the Jewish-held besieged village of Latrun that were fought between May-July 1948, Majali's troops repulsed several Israeli attacks on Arab Legion hill positions. Although the Israelis managed to continue supplying Latrun and keep Legion forces away from Jerusalem, Majali was able to return to Amman as a victor. Regarded as the greatest Jordanian military leader, Majali later became a field marshal, and was the only Arab commander to inflict victories against Israeli, Palestinian and Syrian forces during various conflicts.

After the Arab-Israeli War, Majali commanded Jordanian forces during the Six Day War, Yom Kippur War and a conflict against Palestinian and Syrian forces known as 'Black September'

© Alamy

YIGAEL YADIN

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST AND STAFF OFFICER WHO CLASHED WITH DAVID BEN-GURION IN 1948

1917-84 **ISRAEL**

Born in Jerusalem, Yadin joined Haganah as a teenager in 1933, and rose to become a key leadership figure within the paramilitary organisation. This included time as a commander as well as serving in Haganah's field companies. When Israel was established, he became the military 'Head of Operations' for the new Israel Defence Forces under the command of David Ben-Gurion.

Yadin's leadership against Arab forces was cautious compared to Ben-Gurion's ambitious optimism. At the beginning of the Arab-Israeli War, he assessed that the chances of Israeli success was "very even", while Ben-Gurion said, "We can withstand [an invasion] and defeat it". These military disagreements almost led Yadin to resign in June 1948, but Israeli victory meant that he was promoted to become chief-of-staff of the IDF in November 1949. After leaving the army in 1952, Yadin became a distinguished archaeologist, and later served as deputy prime minister of Israel during 1977-81.

© Getty

Yadin's distinguished archaeological work included the translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and numerous excavations in the Judean Desert

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Husayni was also politically active as the secretary-general of the Palestine Arab Party

ABD AL-QADIR AL-HUSAYNI

THE PALESTINIAN LEADER OF THE 'ARMY OF THE HOLY WAR'

1907-48 **PALESTINE**

Born in Jerusalem to an influential family, Husayni's father once served as the mayor of the city, and was the chairman of the nationalist Palestine Arab Congress. Husayni studied chemistry in Cairo before he fought against the British during the 1936-39 Arab Revolt in Palestine. He was exiled and lived in Iraq and Egypt before he covertly returned home in 1948. From that point, he led the Palestinian Arab irregular 'Army of the Holy War'.

Consisting of 5,000-10,000 fighters, Husayni's force blockaded Jerusalem, and took part in operations in Lod and Ramla. The Army of the Holy War was militarily inferior to the Jewish militias, but Husayni's own unit briefly controlled the main road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. He was considered the most charismatic Palestinian military leader, but was killed at the Battle of al-Qastal on 8 April 1948 by Haganah forces. This created a power vacuum in Palestinian irregular forces, and was a huge morale blow for his men.

CHAIM WEIZMANN

THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL WHOSE BIOCHEMISTRY WORK GREATLY ASSISTED THE ALLIES AND ZIONISM DURING WWI

1874-1952 **ISRAEL**

Born in a region of the Russian Empire that is now part of Belarus, Weizmann trained as a biochemist, and was involved in Zionist activities across Europe. He became a British citizen in 1910, and worked as a lecturer at the University of Manchester. The developer of synthetic acetone, Weizmann's invention was used in the manufacture of cordite explosives during WWI. Acetone was crucial to the Allied war effort, and Weizmann used his respect from the British Government to advance the Zionist cause.

Well-connected with British politicians, Weizmann's efforts culminated in the Balfour Declaration for a Jewish state in 1917 that initially resulted in the British Mandate of Palestine. While serving as the president of the World Zionist Organisation, Weizmann helped to establish the British Army's Jewish Brigade during WWII. He was instrumental in establishing the UN Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947, and became Israel's first president on 17 February 1949. He remained in office until his death in 1952.

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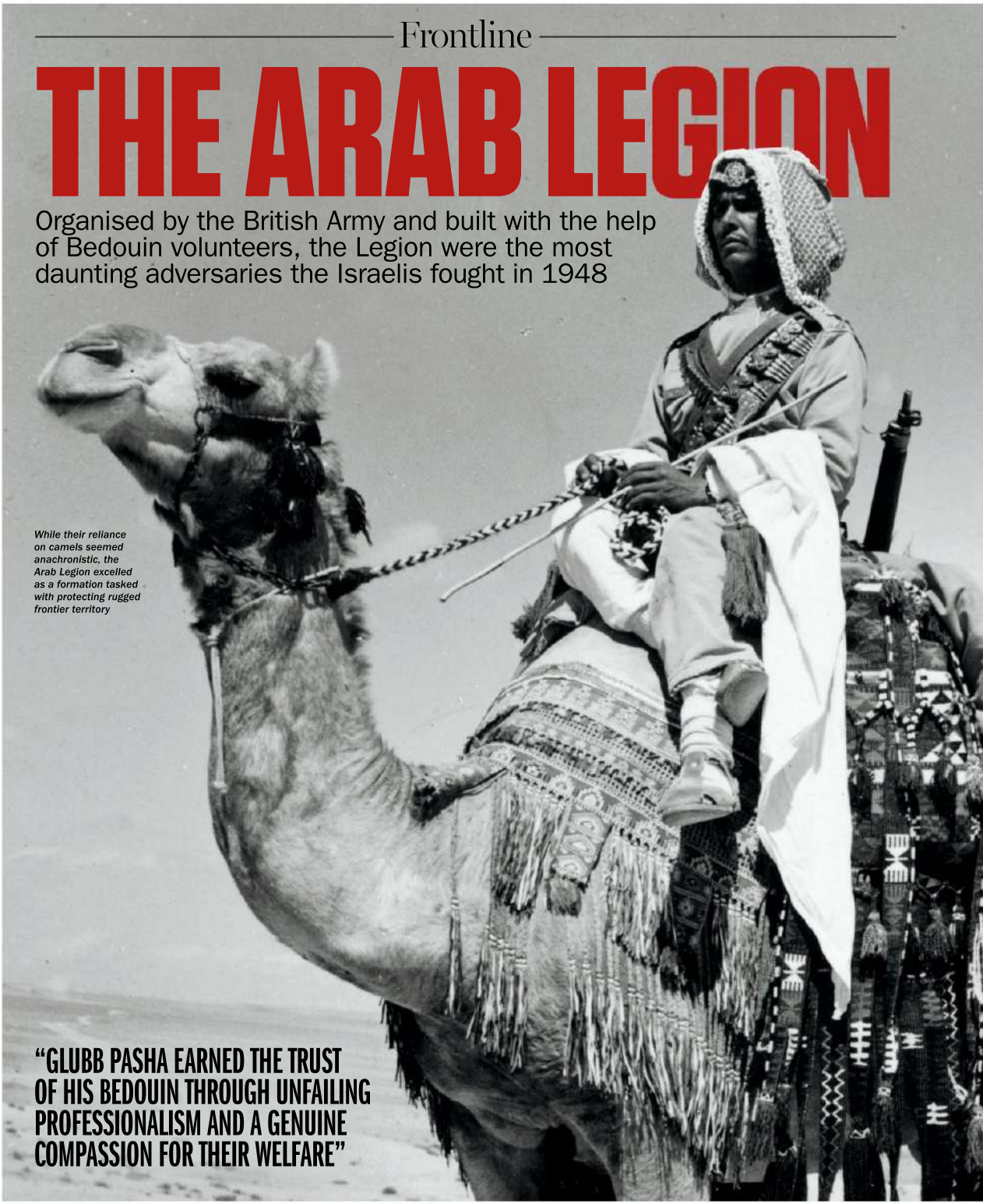
Weizmann renounced his British citizenship when he became president of the new state of Israel, and was on a SS list of wanted individuals if the Nazis had successfully invaded Britain during WWII

THE ARAB LEGION

Organised by the British Army and built with the help of Bedouin volunteers, the Legion were the most daunting adversaries the Israelis fought in 1948



While their reliance on camels seemed anachronistic, the Arab Legion excelled as a formation tasked with protecting rugged frontier territory

"GLUBB PASHA EARNED THE TRUST OF HIS BEDOUIN THROUGH UNFAILING PROFESSIONALISM AND A GENUINE COMPASSION FOR THEIR WELFARE"

The British Army's prolonged excursion in the Middle East had a lasting effect on generations of officers. While TE Lawrence is best remembered for his role in the Arab Revolt and overall contributions to special operations, other men of similar calibre are less celebrated today. One of them is General Sir John Bagot Glubb, whose loyal subordinates ordained him Glubb Pasha, in the Turkish fashion – 'Pasha' being a prestigious moniker for someone of high stature.

In what stands as a unique legacy of British decolonisation from the 1940s onward, the Arab Legion, along with its commander, were passed on to Transjordan before the British Army's exit from Mandatory Palestine. This meant a British general was serving at the leisure of a foreign monarch, in this case the Hashemite King Abdullah I. The Hashemi – or Hashemite dynasty – were a powerful Arab tribe, and the historic overlords of the Hejaz, or the western half of the Arabian desert. Their lineage was sworn to defend the holy city of Mecca, yet the ascendance of the al Sauds – the Saudi royal family – and the demands of geopolitics, meant that the British patronised the Hashemite kings as rulers in their own distinct territory east of the Jordan River, named the Transjordan. At one stage, two Hashemite brothers each ruled over Iraq and Jordan until the former was lost after a nationalist coup d'etat, which deposed King Faisal II in 1958.

With no more than 5,000 troops in its ranks, the Arab Legion was renowned for its professionalism and equipment. In form, it was no different to a British Army division, albeit composed of Bedouin Arabs. On the ground, however, it was tailored for protecting vast frontiers, using camels and horses to traverse the vast and unforgiving terrain.

During the Second World War, Glubb Pasha's track record battling the Axis in Syria, which was then controlled by the Vichy French, settled any doubts about the Legion's effectiveness. The ironic part, then, was that the British Army enlisted many Jewish soldiers from Palestine, among which was a youthful Moshe Dayan, to fight in its ranks. Years later, these men faced the Arab Legion in battle.

With its competence beyond doubt, the Legion's reputation was put to the test in 1948. Glubb Pasha earned the trust of his Bedouin through unfailing professionalism and a genuine compassion for their welfare. These qualities shone through even in the most difficult of circumstances, such as the long months battling in the hills and valleys of the Galilee, or the northern portion of the West Bank.

At the outbreak of war in May, the Arab Legion received orders to begin securing the hilltops west of the Jordan River, along with the Allenby Bridge. The latter was a vital, if modest, piece of infrastructure that allowed Arabs living in the West Bank to cross over and enter Transjordan, which became fully independent as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1946. Under the Legion's control, it was then possible to avert a humanitarian crisis, which Glubb Pasha correctly anticipated. Matters took a turn for the worse, however, when the Israelis launched repeated offensives to roll back the Legion's overextended perimeter. This is where experience won over gallantry. In many engagements over landmarks and dusty roads, the Legion's preparedness beat back the Israelis again and again.

Although the Arab Legion was primarily composed of infantry and cavalry armed with the familiar Lee Enfield rifle, it did have an abundance of heavy weapons, such as 4.5-inch howitzers and mortars. The Legion's unbeatable armoured cars were essential in keeping the roads to Jerusalem free from Israeli control, and these represented Israel's first painful lessons in armoured warfare.

The Haganah and its auxiliaries, on the other hand, made do with a hodgepodge of small arms trafficked from various countries and whatever else could be assembled in crude workshops. When a few Sherman tanks were imported from Europe to even the odds, the Israelis soon realised that maintaining them for battle was far more difficult to overcome than Arab guns.

The Arab Legion had another crucial task that tested even the unfailing resolve of its veterans – keeping Jerusalem as a possession of their king. This was both strategic, in the way it gave the Jordanian ruler the upper hand in negotiations, and deeply symbolic. King Abdullah I, by dint of his lineage, was recognised as the custodian of the Al Aqsa mosque and the Temple Mount it was built upon, along with Jerusalem's other holy sites. Israel would never accept the loss of the city, and finally won it back in 1967. The Arab Legion was disbanded in 1956, leaving their beloved Glubb Pasha retired in Britain.

The Arab Legion were unquestionably superior to their counterparts from Egypt and Iraq, more so the Palestinian Arab militia, when it came to training and equipment

Above: *In 1948 the Jordanians, with the Arab Legion commanded by Glubb Pasha, were the best equipped military facing the Israelis along their eastern border*

Images © Getty

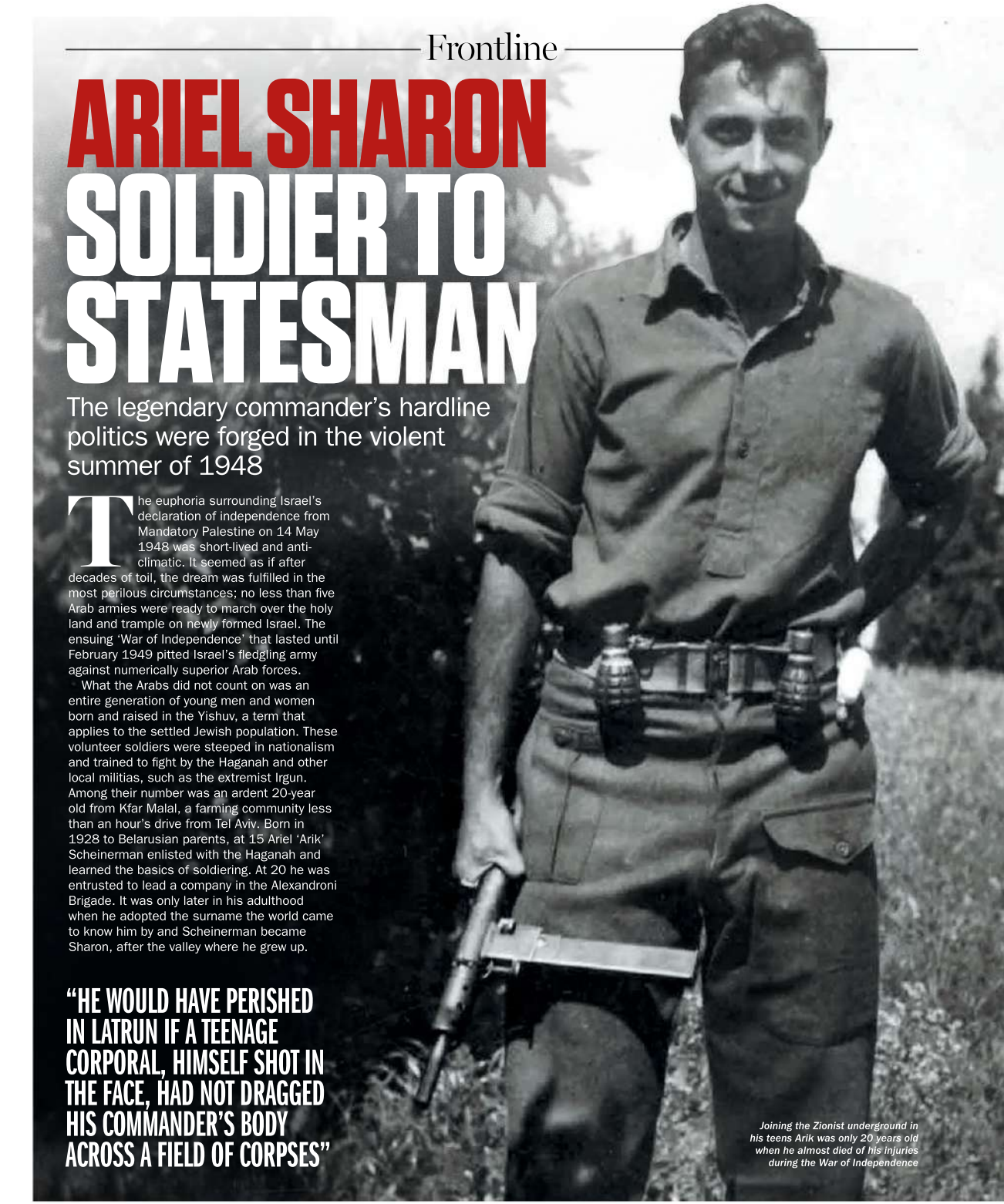
ARIEL SHARON SOLDIER TO STATESMAN

The legendary commander's hardline politics were forged in the violent summer of 1948

The euphoria surrounding Israel's declaration of independence from Mandatory Palestine on 14 May 1948 was short-lived and anti-climatic. It seemed as if after decades of toil, the dream was fulfilled in the most perilous circumstances; no less than five Arab armies were ready to march over the holy land and trample on newly formed Israel. The ensuing 'War of Independence' that lasted until February 1949 pitted Israel's fledgling army against numerically superior Arab forces.

What the Arabs did not count on was an entire generation of young men and women born and raised in the Yishuv, a term that applies to the settled Jewish population. These volunteer soldiers were steeped in nationalism and trained to fight by the Haganah and other local militias, such as the extremist Irgun. Among their number was an ardent 20-year old from Kfar Malal, a farming community less than an hour's drive from Tel Aviv. Born in 1928 to Belarusian parents, at 15 Ariel 'Arik' Scheinerman enlisted with the Haganah and learned the basics of soldiering. At 20 he was entrusted to lead a company in the Alexandroni Brigade. It was only later in his adulthood when he adopted the surname the world came to know him by and Scheinerman became Sharon, after the valley where he grew up.

"HE WOULD HAVE PERISHED IN LATRUN IF A TEENAGE CORPORAL, HIMSELF SHOT IN THE FACE, HAD NOT DRAGGED HIS COMMANDER'S BODY ACROSS A FIELD OF CORPSES"



Joining the Zionist underground in his teens Arik was only 20 years old when he almost died of his injuries during the War of Independence

The most difficult operation of the Alexandroni Brigade in 1948 was the Latrun Fortress, a Taggart fort used by the British for guarding the road connecting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Its sudden evacuation allowed the Jordanian Arab Legion to capture it without much effort. The Israelis could not risk the loss of Jerusalem, and immediately set out to take Latrun in what became a bloodbath for the Palmach. These were the elite companies of the Haganah, and had the best training. As many as several hundred Jewish soldiers lost their lives during weeks of gruelling combat. Most tragic were the young men newly arrived from Europe – survivors of Nazi concentration camps – sent to Latrun as cannon fodder. The youthful Arik led a battalion of them in late May, and met disaster. With his own platoon dying all around him, and shot in the gut himself, Arik waited until sundown to try and escape. He would have perished in Latrun if a teenage corporal, himself shot in the face, had not dragged his commander's body across a field of corpses. Both of them survived, and Arik showed those timeless qualities that manifested in future campaigns – stubbornness, valiance, and always being in the thick of battle.

An interesting detail about Arik's military career was its outlier's trajectory – never receiving 'formal' military education until his late 20s, the grim lessons of war shaped him into a superb commander by any measure. After 1948, he was tasked with organising the elite Unit 101 to protect Israel's borderlands. By then, Arik became so used to leading troops in the most difficult circumstances that he was often deemed callous. This became apparent during the Mitla Pass debacle in 1956, when Israeli paratroopers fought through a gorge against entrenched Egyptians to little avail.

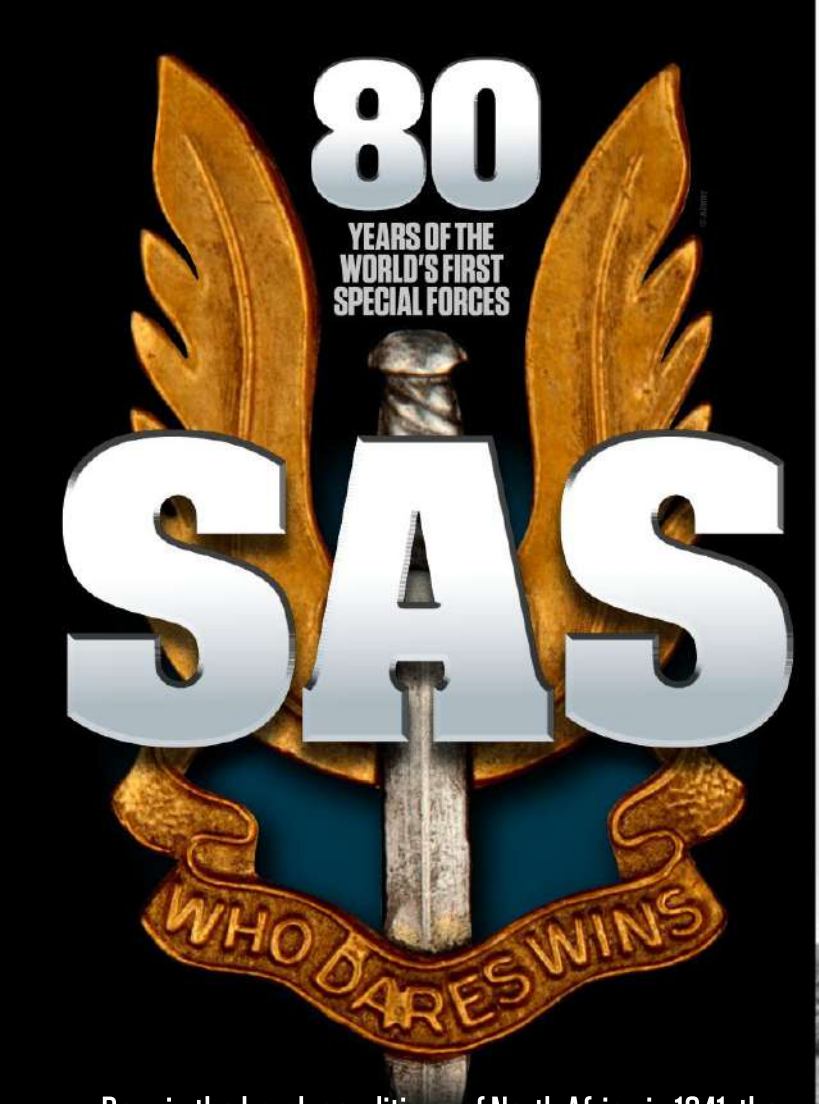
***Above:** Arik was a firm believer in imposing Israeli military control over Arab lands, such as the Gaza Strip, until he ordered the closure of settlements there in 2005 when he was prime minister*

As a general, he was recognised for planning the brilliant counter-offensive in the Sinai that encircled the Egyptian 3rd Army in 1973. By this time, Arik was a giant among the living legends of the IDF, such as Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon. Retiring from the IDF after the Yom Kippur War, he co-founded the right wing Likud political party with Menachem Begin, the former head of the dreaded Irgun militia.

Arik's missteps, however, would have ended any lesser figure's career in ignominy. A defence minister by 1982, he arranged a cassus belli for invading Lebanon as a decisive solution to the Palestinians' attacks on Israel's northern borders. The campaign was a costly debacle that exacerbated the ongoing Lebanese Civil War, and set the stage for the rise of Hezbollah. On 16-17 September, a Lebanese militia committed massacres at refugee camps in the Beirut area. A commission later found that Arik had failed to anticipate and prevent the atrocities, and he resigned as defence minister. Another low point was an ill-timed visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem that triggered the Second Intifada, which lasted several years. Ever controversial even after his death in 2014, Arik will always be remembered as a consequential Israeli leader.

Arik spent much of his adult life serving in the military, and commanded the IDF in multiple campaigns, including the climactic Six Day War

Images © Getty



Born in the harsh conditions of North Africa in 1941, the Regiment has served in combat zones around the world, setting the standard for modern special forces

Respected and feared around the world, the Special Air Service (SAS) has fought in the shadows of Britain's major conflicts and operations for decades. Highly trained, heavily armed and the epitome of professionalism, the men of the Regiment, as it is known, are considered almost without equal, and for over 80 years have been called upon to undertake some of the most challenging and dangerous missions in military history.

Only on rare occasions have they appeared in the public eye – most notably during the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege in London – and for the most part they work in complete secrecy and without report. The training, tactics and traditions of the Regiment formed the blueprint for special forces units around the globe, including the Australian SASR and New Zealand 1 NZSAS Regt – in fact men from both countries played a large part in the original formation of the British SAS, as well as the Long Range Desert Group.

Created by Captain David Stirling in the summer of 1941, the first missions of the SAS were to raid Axis bases in North Africa. It was here that the men of the unit began honing the skills for which the SAS would become renowned – penetrating behind enemy lines, evading detection, striking hard and fast before disappearing once more.

RALPH BAGNOLD & THE LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP

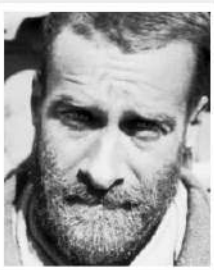
Referred to by David Stirling as the SAS's 'Libyan Taxi Service' this band of intrepid eccentrics, explorers and survivalists formed the early blueprint of the special forces regiment

A WWI veteran who had served as a junior signals officer, by September 1939 Ralph Bagnold had returned to civilian life, working as a writer. After joining up with the armed forces once again, he was posted to Officer Commanding, East Africa Signals, and dispatched on a troopship to Kenya. However, he and the rest of his troop were instead transferred to Port Said, Egypt, after their ship collided with another vessel in the Mediterranean. This would prove to be an auspicious turn of events for the future of Britain's special forces.

Bagnold knew Egypt well, having spent most of the 1920s there with the army. In 1927, he made his first trip into the Libyan desert, leading a small group of explorers in a fleet of Model T Fords. More expeditions followed, penetrating farther into the desert's brutal interior. Bagnold's fascination was as much motivated by science as by exploration, and he began studying the terrain.

Within a few days of his return to Egypt, he met with General Archibald Wavell, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Middle East Command. Wavell questioned Bagnold on the accessibility of the Libyan Desert – the general was increasingly concerned by intelligence reports that the Italians

Heavily armed SAS patrols caused chaos behind enemy lines in the North African desert



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***Left:** Ralph Bagnold played a key role in the formation of the SAS in WWII*

had as many as 250,000 men in 15 divisions under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani. Wavell was so impressed by what Bagnold told him that he arranged for his transfer to North Africa.

Bagnold was posted close to Cairo – where he discovered that the most recent map the British forces possessed of the region in fact dated to WWI. Bagnold's idea was to form a small reconnaissance unit to patrol the border with Libya. However, after being repeatedly rejected by his superiors, it would not be until August 1940 that the first patrol was ready to go.

Captain Pat Clayton and his small hand-picked party of seven left Cairo in two trucks. Crossing the border into Libya, they drove to Siwa Oasis and remained there for three days, concealing themselves from the Italians as they observed the track for signs of activity. They returned to Cairo on 19 August, having covered over 2,500km in 13 days.

Clayton and Bagnold reported their findings to General Wavell, who, having heard an account of the unit's first patrol, fully backed the experimental unit. A week later, Wavell inspected the LRP and told them he had informed the War Office they "were ready to take the field".

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SPECIAL BOAT SECTION

While the Special Air Service cut its teeth in the desert of North Africa, this sister unit honed its craft in the Mediterranean

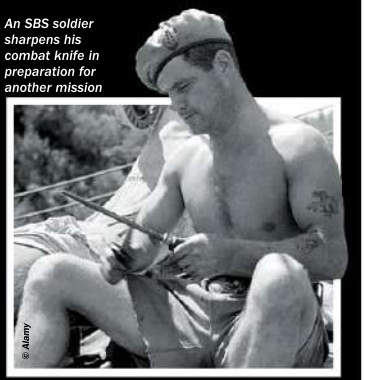
After the fall of France, Churchill announced that Britain would raise its own commandos to hit back at the Germans. Among the many suggestions put forward by Britain's brightest military minds was the idea of a small unit of seaborne raiders. These men would approach enemy targets using special folding canoes made of wood and canvas. The man with the plan was Roger Courtney, who before the war had been an adventurer and explorer, and had experience using foldable canoes during his own expeditions.

After proving the effectiveness of his idea, Courtney was asked to create a Folboat Section in July 1940 – six months later they were deployed to North Africa. On 21 June 1941, the Section achieved its first successful operation when two commandos landed by canoe on the west coast of Italy and blew a train off a coastal railway line.

It was a triumph for the unit, whose name was soon changed to the Special Boat Section. Soon the unit drew the attention of David Stirling, who incorporated the Special Boat Section into the SAS, and throughout the summer of 1942 they traversed the Syrian and Lebanese beaches, and conducted raids on the occupied Greek islands.

Originally the fourth 'D' squadron of the SAS regiment, the SBS was placed under the command of George Jellicoe. By the end of April 1943, the unit had a strength of 13 officers and 118 other ranks. After the Second World War it continued to operate in most major conflicts involving the United Kingdom. In October 2020 the SBS led an operation to retake hijacked cargo ship Nave Andromeda off the coast of the Isle of Wight.

An SBS soldier sharpens his combat knife in preparation for another mission



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THE "PINK PANTHER"

For nearly two decades this distinctive modified vehicle served as a mobile base for SAS operations in desert environments

As well as their distinctive colour scheme, designed to blend in the vehicle with the sunrise and sunset hours, these custom Land Rovers were kitted out with all the survival essentials and weaponry to operate in the harsh desert environments. As well as being Land Rover's most iconic vehicle, the Series IIA is considered its most robust. It could weather the worst that Mother Nature threw at it and its parts were easily replaced. This is one reason the SAS used them for nearly 20 years.

While earlier models were mounted with the Vickers and .30-calibre machine guns, these were later replaced with the General Purpose Machine Guns, which can be mounted at various points. Another key customisation was the engine – while the standard Series IIA had a 2.25-litre diesel engine, these 'Pinkies' were built with the larger, 2.6-litre, six-cylinder petrol engine that was introduced in 1967. This made them faster and far more capable beasts. A 109-inch wheelbase meant that the Series IIA vehicles were able to carry more gear, and they were capable of supporting longer-range missions than the predecessor Series I.

SERIES IIA 90 LAND ROVER

ENGINE SIZE	2.6 LITRE
TOP SPEED	88 KPH
WEIGHT	3,050 KG
CREW	3
MODIFICATIONS	DOORS, WINDSCREEN & CANOPY REMOVED; 4 FUEL TANKS (454 LITRES); CUSTOM PAINTWORK 9x16 TYRES EXTRA WEAPONS

A surviving Pink Panther Land Rover

© Alamy

SAS TOUGHEST MISSIONS

Over 80 years the SAS has taken part in many challenging operations and played an often critical but covert role in conflicts around the world

WORDS JON TRIGG

THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE 1944

In the build up to and aftermath of the Normandy landings, several SAS squadrons entered German territory and caused mayhem for the enemy, destroying weapons, supplies and communication and transport lines

In March 1944, SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) issued the SAS its operational instructions for D-Day. The brigade (now made up of 1SAS, 2SAS, two French regiments, 3 & 4, and a company of Belgian soldiers) would parachute into Normandy between the landing beaches and the German reserves 36 hours ahead of the main invasion. Their mission was to stop three Panzer divisions of reserves from reaching the beaches after the landings began. Recognising this was an impossible mission, Lieutenant Colonel Bill Stirling demanded that the SAS should operate in occupied France similar to their methods in North Africa, attacking the lines of communication, liaising with the French resistance and hampering German reinforcements.

On 28 May, 21 Army Group issued an amended order for the brigade to replace the original order two months earlier. The SAS would carry out 43 missions in France, all but one entailing the insertion of SAS units deep behind enemy lines.

"THEIR MISSION WAS TO STOP THREE PANZER DIVISIONS OF RESERVES FROM REACHING THE BEACHES"

01 OPERATION HOUNDSWORTH

The first major mission into Occupied France was codenamed Houndsworth, and involved A Squadron. Its aim was to cut the railway lines between Lyon and Paris, train groups of Maquis in the area, and generally disrupt enemy activity as much as possible. As the Allied invasion fleet prepared to sail for the Normandy beaches on the night of 5 June, a small number of A Squadron landed in the countryside of the Massif du Morvan, west of the city of Dijon. By 22 June, the remaining 46 men of A Squadron were safely inserted, and two days later ambushed an Axis convoy sent to intercept them.

02 OPERATION WALLACE

Between 19 August and 10 September, 2SAS harassed German units in the area around Auxerre, ambushing convoys and sabotaging fuel depots. 500 Germans were killed or wounded, 59 motorised vehicles destroyed and nearly 500,000 litres of enemy fuel destroyed.

03 OPERATION TITANIC

Titanic was conducted by just four SAS men, whose objectives were to create a diversion just behind the Normandy beaches, before the arrival of the main invasion on 6 June. This distraction consisted of throwing several sandbags dressed up as paratroopers from a low-flying aircraft. The sandbags were fitted with firecrackers to explode on landing – the mission was unsuccessful.

04 OPERATION DINGSON

This mission in Brittany was carried out by the French SAS in June and ended in the Battle of St Marcel, which cost six SAS and left 300 Germans dead.

05 OPERATION HAFT

This reconnaissance mission was launched in July 1944, with the goal of identifying and relaying German positions ahead of the Allied breakout from the Cotentin Peninsula.

06 OPERATION HARDY

The forerunner to Operation Wallace, Hardy's goal was to lay supplies and provide intelligence for another SAS squadron arriving to operate in the region.

07 OPERATION RUPERT

This 2SAS operation only began in the middle of August, 1944. The men dropped into eastern France with orders to sabotage railway lines between Nancy and Chalons-sur-Marne. By late summer, however, the Germans were already rapidly heading east, with the American Third Army not far behind them. This meant for a time the squadron acted as reconnaissance patrols for their allies.

08 OPERATION COONEY

This mission saw 18 French SAS sabotage teams dropped into France by parachute. Cooney's aim was to isolate Brittany by quickly cutting its railway lines. The mission began on 8 June and forced an entire battle group of the German 275th Division to abandon the railway and take to the road. They eventually arrived to the frontline, and the Allied beach heads, some two days late.

09 OPERATION BULBASKET

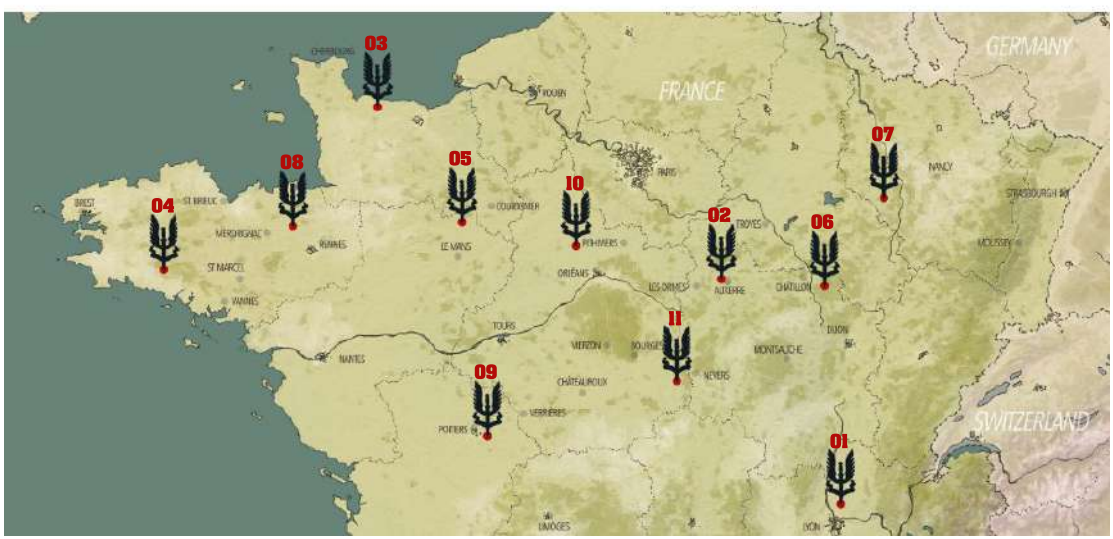
Commanded by Captain John Tonkin, Bulbasket was a 1SAS operation that began on the night of 5/6 June when the men parachuted into the countryside south of Poitiers. From the start, the operation suffered from the proximity of large numbers of enemy troops and at dawn on 3 July the camp was overrun by the Germans, who captured 31 SAS soldiers – all of whom were executed.

10 OPERATION GAIN

D squadron, 1SAS, operated for two months in the Rambouillet area, 50km south of Paris. Although several of the 60 or so men who began the mission were lost, the SAS inflicted heavy damage on the Germans in a series of guerrilla style raids, while also derailing trains, cutting railway lines and relaying key intelligence on German troop movements close to the capital.

11 OPERATION HAGGARD

One squadron of 1SAS troops parachuted in west of the Loire in early August, forming a base between Bourges and Nevers. Ordered to create chaos and disruption among the German ranks, during one attack they ambushed an enemy convoy with a huge roadside bomb, before mopping up the survivors with small-arms fire. Approximately 100 enemy were reportedly killed during this single action.



THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY 1948-60

Disbanded in October 1945, the SAS was resurrected to tackle a communist insurgency in the jungles of Southeast Asia

Having been awarded an OBE for fighting the Japanese invaders in the Second World War, Chin Peng – the head of the Malayan Communist Party – launched his campaign to throw Britain out of her Malayan colony by shooting dead three British plantation staff on the morning of 16 June 1948. The fighting quickly escalated as the 8,000 members of Peng's Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) used guerilla tactics to attack government personnel and sabotage infrastructure. Defeating them in their jungle strongholds required something different from the norm, and in 1950 a former Chindit, Colonel 'Mad Mike' Calvert, was tasked to find a solution. His answer was to create a new unit that would operate in the same jungles as the insurgents, carrying out long-term patrols to hunt down the enemy and beat him at his own game. The new unit was called the Malayan Scouts (SAS Regiment).

After something of a rocky start, when recruits to the Scouts even included some deserters from the French Foreign Legion, Lieutenant-Colonel John Sloane took command and turned the tide. Out went the more outlandish elements of training, non-regulation dress and hard drinking, and in came a relentless focus on bush craft and professional soldiering. Volunteers for the unit now underwent extensive training at a specialist jungle warfare school manned by experienced instructors. Working with the air force, 'green army' units and the local Malay Police, the SAS teams would stay in the jungle for weeks, gathering intelligence, setting ambushes and attacking insurgent bases. During this period units from New Zealand, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Fiji also fought alongside the Scouts, laying the foundations of special forces units in those countries and forging strong links, many of which are still in place today.

Malaya gained its independence on 31 August 1957, and with it the reason for the insurgency disappeared. Three years later – with some 11,000 MNLA guerillas killed or captured and Chin Peng fleeing to China – the Emergency was declared over.

© Getty

Two New Zealand SAS men patrolling along a riverbank in the Malay jungle in 1957, machine guns at the ready

SAS troopers wait before 'tree parachuting' (a technique of low-level jumping) onto communist insurgents in the Malayan jungle on 29 October 1959

© Alamy

A hostage climbs to safety as fire takes hold inside the embassy

© Getty

OPERATION NIMROD
THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE MAY 1980

Terrorists take over a London embassy and seize hostages – beginning one of the most famous operations in SAS history

At 11:30am on 30 April 1980, six armed men stormed the Iranian Embassy in South Kensington, in the heart of London. They were members of an Iranian Arab terrorist group calling for national sovereignty in the Khuzestan province. While three people managed to escape, two out of a ground floor window and one across a first-floor parapet, the terrorists took 26 hostages and demanded the release of Arab prisoners, as well as safe passage out of the UK.

The government refused the terrorists' demands and a siege ensued. With crowds of journalists and a live television crew assembled outside the building, it was to become one of the most-publicised events of all time, with the SAS firmly placed in the spotlight.

On the evening of 3 May an SAS team met on the roof of the embassy, unlocked a skylight and attached ropes to the chimneys in preparation to enter the building. Two days later, Oan Ali Mohammed, the terrorist group's leader, threatened to kill a hostage if he was not allowed to speak with an Arab ambassador within 45 minutes. After this time passed, three shots were heard. Later that day a dead body was dumped outside the front door.

That evening, at around 19:23, the SAS split into four-man teams and silently approached different entry points on the five floors, from the basement to roof. Once in position, they were to place specially shaped frame charges on the windows and doors to gain entry to the embassy. Four men abseiled from the roof down the back of the building, but in the process one became tangled in his rope and another accidentally smashed a window while trying to free him, alerting the terrorists. Meanwhile, another team on the roof opened the skylight and threw a stun grenade down, which shook the building upon detonation. The smoke caused confusion and panic inside the embassy.

Within minutes, four of the six terrorists had been shot and killed, and the hostages were being rapidly evacuated down the stairs of the embassy. One of the terrorists, known as Faisal, was spotted among the hostages, with a grenade gripped in his hand. He was shot and killed. In total, five of the six terrorists had been killed and one of the hostages had been executed during the assault, while two SAS men had also been wounded.

"IT WAS TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST-PUBLICISED EVENTS OF ALL TIME, WITH THE SAS FIRMLY PLACED IN THE SPOTLIGHT"

SAS troops blast their way into the Iranian Embassy as TV cameras captured the drama

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The aftermath of Loughgall. The van that gunmen used to mount the attack sits parked outside the wrecked perimeter fence of the station in the village

© Alamy

The IRA weapons captured at Loughgall. Forensics linked them to 33 attacks and eight murders in total, including that of construction boss Harold Henry

OPERATION JUDY
LOUGHGALL, NORTHERN IRELAND 8 MAY 1987

The SAS operation that destroyed the heart of the Provisional IRA's East Tyrone Brigade

Fifteen years after the start of the conflict known as the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, the East Tyrone Brigade of the Provisional IRA had become one of its deadliest units. In the fields and villages of its rural heartland it carried out attacks on Army patrols and off-duty members of the security forces seemingly at will. Then, in the mid-1980s, Provisional high command – its seven-man Army Council – gave the go-ahead for a bold new strategy they hoped would change the face of the undeclared war in Northern Ireland. This was the so-called 'liberated zone' campaign. The plan was to destroy isolated Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) stations and then stop them being rebuilt by threatening building contractors. This would force the security forces to abandon large swathes of the border regions and effectively hand control to the terrorists.

Led by Patrick Kelly – the head of the East Tyrone Brigade – the IRA first struck Ballygawley RUC station on the evening of 7 December 1985, just as the five officers inside were shutting up shop for the night. Two constables, William Clements and George Gilliland, were shot dead and the other three were injured when the IRA blew the building up. The following year it was the turn of The Birches station to be destroyed. Targeting civilian contractors to stop them rebuilding the bases, an IRA hit squad arrived at the home of 52-year-old construction boss Harold Henry at 11pm on the night of 21 April 1987. Henry was shot dead in front of his family.

In response to this and other killings, the British Government tasked the Special Air Service with stopping the Provisionals. However, this was easier said than done. The SAS had been on the ground in Northern Ireland since 1976 and knew just how hard it was to operate there. First and foremost there was a lack of intelligence. The terrorists lived in close-knit rural communities where secrecy was second nature, and where the Active Service Units (ASUs) they were targeting used sophisticated anti-detection techniques. But the SAS were patient. Working alongside RUC Special Branch, the covert operators of the Army's 14 Intelligence Company and the local battalion of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), the SAS prepared to strike back at the Provisional IRA.

Their opportunity came on the night of Friday 8 May 1987 in the quiet village of Loughgall. As the locals settled down for the evening, eight terrorists appeared in a stolen HiAce van and a JCB digger with a bomb in the bucket. Heavily armed, the men raked the RUC station with gunfire and lit the bomb fuse, only to be met by a storm of gunfire from well over a dozen hidden SAS men. All eight terrorists were killed. It was the IRA's biggest single loss since 1921. For the SAS it was a huge success, and one from which the East Tyrone IRA never recovered.

OPERATION GRANBY
THE PERSIAN GULF WAR 1990-91

An SAS mission to locate Scud missile launch sites in Iraq ends in disaster

On 2 August 1990 the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. A coalition force from 35 nations assembled in Saudi Arabia to liberate the emirate. In an attempt to destabilise the coalition, Hussein ordered Scud missile attacks on Saudi Arabia and Israel. Desperate to halt these attacks, three eight-man SAS teams were deployed deep behind enemy lines in Iraq to gather intelligence and help find the missiles and their mobile launchers.

One of the patrols – codenamed Bravo Two Zero and led by Andy McNab (real name Steven Mitchell) – was flown in by helicopter on the night of 22/23 January 1991, and then 'tabbed' (marched) to their designated observation point. Plagued by bad luck and mistakes from the start, they found their radios didn't work and were then compromised a day later. The patrol tried to exfiltrate to safety, but instead found themselves separated into two groups, both of which headed north to try and reach the Syrian border almost 320km away. Lack of water, the desert cold and fire-fights with Iraqis took their toll and over the next few days three of the patrol died and four were captured, with only one (Chris Ryan) making it to Syria – a feat he claimed to be the longest escape and evasion by any SAS trooper in history.

The captured men were released at the end of the war and several team members were decorated, including McNab, who was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). Controversy has dogged the mission ever since. McNab himself wrote a bestseller – entitled *Bravo Two Zero* – about the patrol, to be followed by several others including his fellow team member Chris Ryan.

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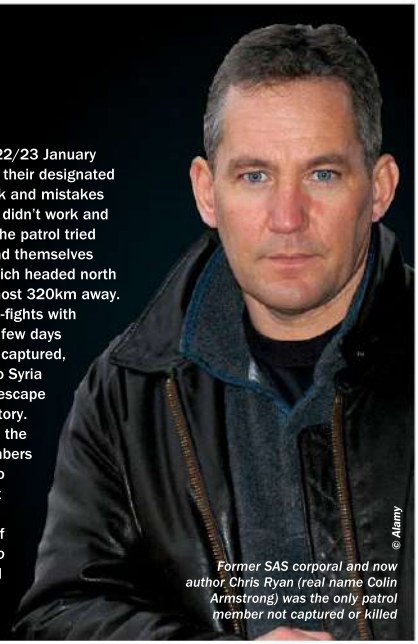
Peter de la Billière, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in the 1990-91 Gulf War and himself an SAS officer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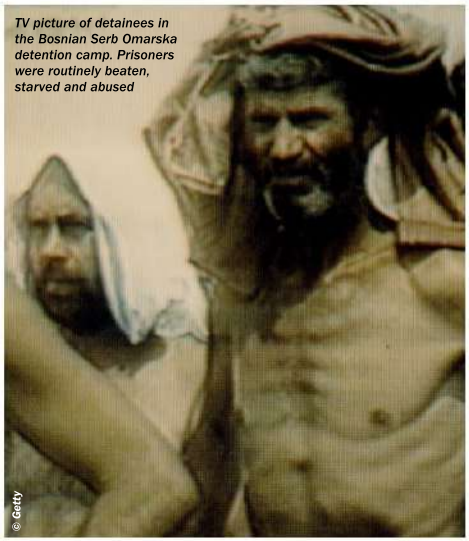
Former SAS corporal and now author Chris Ryan (real name Colin Armstrong) was the only patrol member not captured or killed


TV picture of detainees in the Bosnian Serb Omarska detention camp. Prisoners were routinely beaten, starved and abused

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OPERATIONS TANGO AND ENSUE
ARRESTING BOSNIAN WAR CRIMINALS 1992-2004

Numerous atrocities were committed during the Balkans conflict – but the perpetrators had nowhere to hide from the SAS

The implosion of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia in the early 1990s led to a number of bloody wars, the worst of which was in Bosnia, where Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Bosnian Muslims were involved in crimes that led to the coining of the phrase 'ethnic cleansing' and the first genocides in Europe since the Second World War.

With the world watching, the SAS was deployed to hunt down and arrest suspected war criminals. The operations were incredibly delicate, requiring the Special Forces to first find the suspects, before launching complex missions to apprehend their targets with minimal force.

Operation Tango was the first such mission, with two five-man SAS teams swooping in by helicopter on 10 July 1997 to arrest Milan Kovacevic and Simo Drljaca. Both were suspected of involvement in ethnic cleansing and the horrors of camps such as Omarska. Kovacevic went quietly, but Drljaca opened fire, slightly wounding an SAS trooper before being cut down himself. Fourteen months later it was the turn of Stevan Todorovic. Hiding out in a log cabin in Serbia, a four-man SAS team burst in and bundled him into a waiting 4x4 before smuggling him across the River Drina back into Bosnia in an inflatable dinghy. War criminals knew nowhere was safe from the SAS.

© Getty

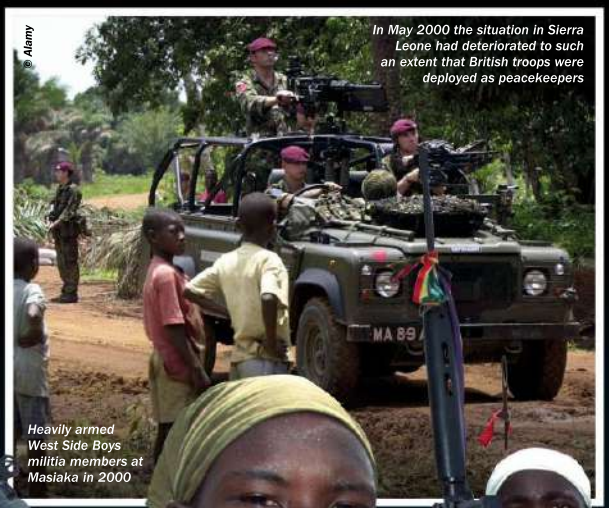
Left: *Ex-Bosnian Serb police chief Stevan Todorovic on trial at The Hague. He admitted murder, torture and sexual assault against Muslims and Croats and got 10 years in prison*

OPERATION BARRAS
HOSTAGE RESCUE SIERRA LEONE 10 SEPTEMBER 2000

When 11 British soldiers are captured by a militia group in West Africa, the SAS launches a daring mission to save them

The civil war in the west African state of Sierra Leone was vicious and characterised by the use of child soldiers and widespread mutilations. The British Government deployed troops as peacekeepers in May 2000, only for 11 officers and men from 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment to be taken hostage by a local militia group – the so-called West Side Boys – on 25 August. Negotiations secured the release of five soldiers, but fearing for the safety of the remaining six, London authorised a rescue operation. The West Side Boys were unpredictable and often high on drugs, so speed was of the essence. While 1 Para launched a diversion, troopers from D Squadron fast-roped from Chinooks into the village where the Royal Irish were being held. Covered by two Lynx attack helicopters and supported by SAS observation teams already on the ground, the assault troop cleared the village house by house and freed the hostages, including over 20 innocent Sierra Leoneans. In less than 20 minutes it was all over: 25 militia were killed for the loss of one SAS trooper – Lance Bombardier Bradley Tinnion.

"THE WEST SIDE BOYS WERE UNPREDICTABLE AND OFTEN HIGH ON DRUGS, SO SPEED WAS OF THE ESSENCE"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In May 2000 the situation in Sierra Leone had deteriorated to such an extent that British troops were deployed as peacekeepers

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Heavily armed West Side Boys militia members at Masiaka in 2000

SAS GREAT ESCAPES

Best-selling author and expert on the history of the Regiment, Damien Lewis, reveals two incredible stories of endurance and survival in World War II

During the Second World War the SAS brought an unorthodox approach to fighting the enemy using audacious bluff and nerve. They also became pioneers in the art of escape and evasion. Here are two stories of the enduring qualities of the 'SAS great escapers', from the early stages and latter chapters of the Second World War. Each embodies the spirit of never giving up and the desire to escape, evade and survive come what may. They epitomise the founding principles of the SAS regiment. While the weaponry, vehicles, insertion techniques and escape and evasion kit might have changed greatly, the basic tenets of the SAS remain the same today as they were in WWII – proving absolutely that who dares wins.

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Damien Lewis is a former foreign correspondent and now the author of several best-selling history titles, including several on the history of the SAS. His latest book, **SAS Great Escapes**, *is available now in all good stores*

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Gavi fortress in Italy was said to be escape-proof – but that didn't stop the imprisoned SAS men from trying

Italy, 1941

On 10 February 1941, 36 British raiders parachuted into the night skies above Fascist Italy to undertake a mission of breathtaking daring. They aimed to blow up the Aqueduct Pugliese, source of the fresh-water for the cities in the south of the country and the key ports used by the Italian armed forces.

Codenamed Operation Colossus, this was the first ever Allied airborne operation and it was carried out by 11 Special Air Service Brigade, the forerunner of David Stirling's soon-to-be-legendary SAS. According to the raid's commanding officer, Major 'Tag' Pritchard, his force would be "pioneers or guinea pigs, whichever way you prefer to look at it".

Operation Colossus was an utterly audacious and daring undertaking, but not everything went to plan that night. One of the Whitley warplanes carrying the team of Royal Engineer sappers went missing, along with the bulk of the explosives. Plus, the mission briefings proved woefully wrong, mistakenly reporting the piers of the aqueduct to be constructed of brickwork instead of reinforced concrete – which would take far more explosive power to destroy.

Everything now relied upon the genius and nerve of the one remaining sapper in Pritchard's team – Canadian Lieutenant George Robert Paterson. A tough, resolute giant of a man, Paterson decided there was only one option: to pack all the crates of explosives around the one pier and hope for the best. Having lit the fuse, and after a thunderous roar, Paterson and his fellow raiders witnessed a fabulous sight: the Aqueduct Pugliese was cut in two, its precious water cascading into the valley below.

The raiders split up into three parties, one led by Paterson, seeking to make their escape across the Apennine Mountains, heading for Italy's western shore where the British submarine HMS Triumph should be waiting to rescue them. Frozen, exhausted and hampered by ankle-deep freezing mud, on the second night Paterson decided to risk going by road, or they would never make the rendezvous in time. But at a crossroads they failed to see the heavily armed Carabinieri lying in wait.

"EVERYTHING NOW RELIED UPON THE GENIUS AND NERVE OF THE ONE REMAINING SAPPER IN PRITCHARD'S TEAM – CANADIAN LIEUTENANT GEORGE ROBERT PATERSON"

Captured and transported to a Naples military prison, Paterson was interrogated by the Questura – Mussolini's secret police – but refused to talk. To his relief, threats of execution proved hollow. Instead, as British prisoners of war they were transferred to a remote POW camp in the mountains around Sulmona, in south-central Italy.

Right away Paterson and his fellow captives set about masterminding a series of ingenious escape attempts: digging a tunnel leading from a broom cupboard to beyond the perimeter fence, chiselling through a bricked-up passageway, and more. But one by one their escape attempts were foiled – all except for one of the Colossus team.

Pritchard's second-in-command, Lt Anthony Deane-Drummond, faked an ear infection and with breathtaking cunning and nerve sneaked past his guards and made it to the Swiss border, and from there back to Allied lines. But Deane-Drummond's escape resulted in the other raiders being transferred to the Gavi POW camp, an ancient fortress that was said to be escape-proof. After long months of incarceration, Paterson felt his hopes ebbing away.

Then, in September 1943, Italy's leaders signed an armistice with the Allies. With German troops taking over the Gavi fortress, the prisoners were told to prepare to be moved. Herded onto a train, all feared a one-way journey to Germany, and Paterson in particular sensed this was his last chance to escape. Utterly determined, he and others burrowed a small hole in the carriage's wooden side. By midnight, it was big enough for a man to squeeze through. As the train slowed, Paterson took a leap into the darkness, his large frame crashing onto the gravel embankment below.

After a rattle of semi-automatic gunfire, Paterson took his chance and made a run for it, getting clean away. In a hazardous journey through hostile country, Paterson marched day and night across wild, rugged hills with little food and drinking from streams. On the point of total exhaustion, he reached the town of Brescia where his dishevelled appearance turned heads. But a local man realised Paterson was on the run, introducing him to another English escapee, Corporal Jack Harris.

Harris and Paterson were taken to meet a well-connected figure, Signor Rossi, based in Milan. The pro-British Rossi had already helped many POWs escape across the border into Switzerland. Some, however, preferred to stay in the Italian countryside, sheltering with local families. With the Gestapo hunting for such

© Damien Lewis

Having escaped, Paterson spent three years in the Italian (and Swiss) mountains, operating alongside the Partisans, finally serving as an agent of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)

escapees, Rossi persuaded both Harris and Paterson to join his escape network, for there was much work to be done.

Over the following months Paterson and Harris tracked down dozens of POWs, but found many were reluctant to risk breaking cover, believing that the Allies were about to liberate Italy. Paterson warned them that was unlikely for a year: they must escape while they had the chance. Perhaps Paterson should have heeded his own advice.

On a journey to aid one such escapee, Paterson was seized by the Voluntary Militia for National Security – the Blackshirts – and locked up in the notorious San Vittore prison, an escape-proof building in central Milan. Hauled off for relentless interrogation by the Gestapo, Paterson knew that should he crack, all in the Italian escape network would pay with their lives.

Despite threats that he would be shot as a spy, he held out. Adjusting to captivity once more was harsh, and made even more so by the brutality of two senior SS officers: Sergeant Major Schwarz and his assistant Corporal Franz, who relished causing pain and humiliation to any who stepped out of line.

Among the prisoners, Paterson was shocked to discover whole families, including women and children – Jews, being prepared for transportation to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Deeply moved by their plight, he shared what food he could while risking a few words of encouragement. The thought of their dark fate strengthened his resolve to escape once more.

By early summer 1944, Paterson spotted a familiar face in the prison that filled him with despair: Signor Rossi, his friend and mastermind of the Milan escape network, was thrown into an isolation cell. Desperate to speak with him, Paterson had almost lost

"PATERSON KNEW THAT SHOULD HE CRACK, ALL IN THE ITALIAN ESCAPE NETWORK WOULD PAY WITH THEIR LIVES"

hope, when one morning Rossi reappeared. The two POWs managed a quick exchange of words. The Gestapo had gleaned nothing from Rossi, barring a list showing the number of Allied POWs he had helped escape – nearly 3,000. Paterson feared his friend would surely be shot, and warned him as much. "There is always a way out if you have money, George," Rossi countered.

He warned Paterson that one of the warders was being bribed to help him escape. He wanted Paterson to join him. If everything went to plan they would be out in a week's time. Paterson was speechless but thrilled.

The big day arrived and Paterson dressed in some civilian clothes, with prison overalls pulled over them. Using his prison duties as cover, he grabbed a pile of dirty blankets and set off for the perimeter wall, which lay across a wide courtyard. His heart pounding, but keeping his steps measured, he made it across under the watchful gaze of the guards.

Slipping through a gate, he was now on the gravel road between the two perimeter walls. Fifty yards to his right lay a shed. Following Rossi's instructions, he slipped inside, removed his prison overalls, reshaped the fedora hat he had hidden under his arm and prepared for the final breakout. Exiting, he headed for the door in the outer wall – one that was always kept locked. But a duplicate key had been made by the warder that Rossi had bribed. Turning the handle, to Paterson's relief it slid wide open. As an approaching tram bell jangled, freedom beckoned once more.

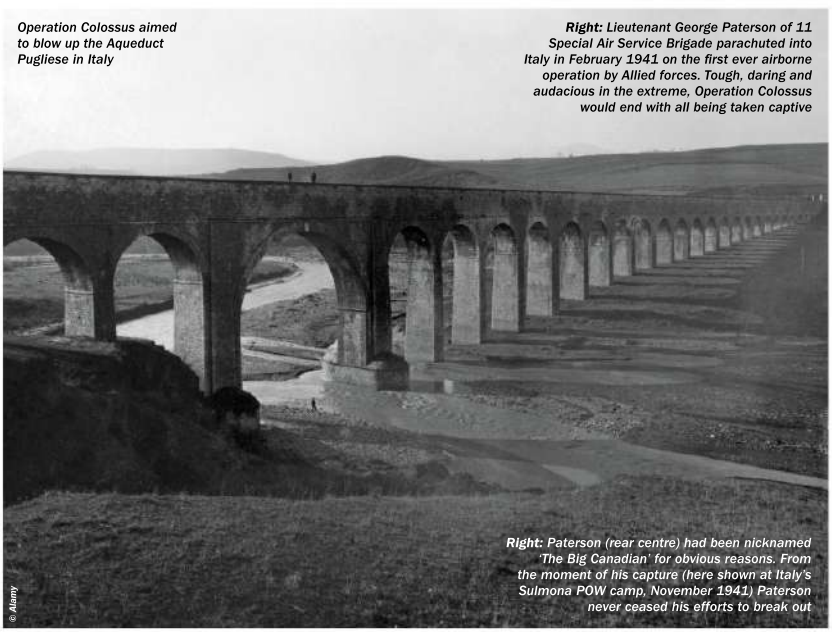
About to step forward, Paterson froze: coming around the corner was the familiar figure of one of Corporal Franz's henchmen. Paterson's only choice was to brazen it out. Pulling his hat brim low, he strode purposefully ahead and slipped around the corner. Without hesitation he headed for the tram and within moments he had dived aboard and was gone.

Heading straight for a trusted contact in Milan, he was told that Rossi had escaped and was heading for Switzerland. Paterson should do the same. After three and a half years on the run and in captivity, Paterson set out on the same journey to freedom that he had made possible for so many others. But his adventures were far from over…

Having reached Switzerland safely, Paterson would be recruited by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Churchill's 'Ministry for Ungentlemanly Warfare', as an agent. He would return to Italy under a false identity to help the Italian Partisans rise up against the enemy. But in a brutal and bloody battle the Partisans' senior commanders would be shot dead, and Paterson, injured, would be taken captive once more and returned to the dreaded San Vittore prison.

Surviving the terrible experience, he made one last attempt to escape, in April 1945, even as the Allies drew close to Milan. Mounting an extraordinary breakout with his fellow prisoners, they overpowered the guards and stormed through the gates to final freedom.

For his incredible exploits in Italy, George Robert Paterson would later be promoted to captain and awarded the Military Cross with two bars – the equivalent of the Military Cross three times.



Operation Colossus aimed to blow up the Aqueduct Pugliese in Italy

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***Right:** Lieutenant George Paterson of 11 Special Air Service Brigade parachuted into Italy in February 1941 on the first ever airborne operation by Allied forces. Tough, daring and audacious in the extreme, Operation Colossus would end with all being taken captive*

© Damien Lewis

***Right:** Paterson (rear centre) had been nicknamed 'The Big Canadian' for obvious reasons. From the moment of his capture (here shown at Italy's Sulmona POW camp, November 1941) Paterson never ceased his efforts to break out*

© Damien Lewis

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Vosges Mountains, France, July 1944

Following the Normandy landings in June 1944, Allied forces thrust south and east, determined to drive all opposition before them. But in the Vosges Mountains, on the French border with Germany, Hitler ordered his senior commander to make a desperate stand. No effort was to be spared to prevent the Allies from marching into the Fatherland.

On 28 July 1944, a total of 1,142 RAF bombers set off from bases across Britain, with a mission to hit Nazi Germany's key infrastructure. Among the thousands of brave Allied bomber crew was 27-year-old Canadian flying officer Ronald Lewis 'Lew' Fiddick, part of a seven-man crew tasked to destroy Stuttgart's main rail hub. Fiddick, that night's bomb-aimer, lay prone on the floor of the nose of the Lancaster – L-7567, nicknamed 'K for King' - which was about to complete its 99th sortie.

As the dense forests of the Vosges Mountains came into view, the rear gunner was the first to spot a German Junkers Ju 88 night-fighter in hot pursuit. The Lancaster pilot threw the aircraft into a corkscrew descent, diving to escape the enemy fire, but a burst of tracer ripped into the rear of the Lancaster's fuselage destroying the tail controls.

As the Lancaster was raked by further bursts of fire, it was time to bail out. Fiddick was determined to stay and help the rest of the aircrew, but moments later an almighty jolt catapulted him straight through the escape hatch set in the aircraft's nose. Triggering his parachute, Fiddick landed in thick forest and slithered to the ground.

© Damien Lewis

Ronald Lewis 'Lew' Fiddick (left) together with 20-year-old pilot Harold Sherman Peabody (right) and 22-year-old navigator James Harrington Doe (centre), fellow aircrew from the RAF's 622 Squadron

Alone, unarmed and in hostile territory he was so stunned at what had transpired he remained where he was until morning, when he discovered that one of his knees was injured and that he'd lost his boots in the fall.

Making his way barefoot through the trees, Fiddick hid for two days, before finding shelter in a barn. But the following day local villagers discovered him. Luckily, they were friendly to the Allied cause. They alerted the Resistance, who helped Fiddick reach their headquarters, set deep in the forest.

On the 13 August 1944, Fiddick learned that British paratroopers had landed nearby. It turned out to be an advance party of the SAS, engaged on reconnaissance for a far larger mission, codenamed Operation Loyton. This was a major SAS undertaking, which aimed to hit enemy road and rail communications deep behind the lines, giving the impression that Allied forces were breaking through the Vosges defences.

***Above:** Entrance to the Natzweiler concentration camp, in the Vosges, where two of Fiddick's crewmates, pilot Harold Sherman Peabody and navigator James Harrington Doe, were believed to have been taken and murdered after their capture*

Fiddick was introduced to 23-year-old Captain Henry Druce, the commander of the advance party. Previously seconded to the SOE, Druce had assisted downed Allied airmen in Nazi-occupied-Europe, until his cover was blown, forcing him to cross hundreds of miles of hostile territory to reach England. There, he met by chance senior SAS commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Franks, who asked him to join their ranks.

Druce recognised a like-minded soul in the gutsy Canadian airman, and invited him to join the SAS patrol – at that moment just 12-strong. If nothing else, his help should prove invaluable in forging a good relationship with the Resistance.

Shortly, Druce and his men were alerted to the presence of thousands of German troops, including Gestapo and Einsatzgruppen – paramilitary 'death squads' – combing the surrounding forests in an effort to find the 'British parachutists' and wipe them out.

With the enemy drawing close, Druce ordered everyone to move out. After hours of hard marching, the SAS stumbled upon a German patrol taking a rest break, which led to a fierce fire-fight. As enemy machine guns chewed their way through vegetation, an SAS trooper returned fire with his Sten, but was immediately cut down. Heavily outnumbered and outgunned, Druce ordered his men to split up and head for an agreed emergency rendezvous.

Above: The men of RAF 622 Squadron gathered before one of the four-engine 'heavies'. When Fiddick was forced to bail out of crippled Lancaster L7576 in July 1944 he managed to link up with an SAS unit deep in France and was recruited on the spot

© Damien Lewis

Five days later, Druce tallied the losses: two dead and the survivors left without radios, ammo, explosives and food. A desperate situation was turned around on 1 September 1944, when Colonel Franks himself parachuted in with reinforcements and supplies. On meeting the Canadian airman serving with Druce, Franks, who had led specialist reconnaissance operations in the Middle East earlier in the war, formally invited Fiddick into the ranks of the SAS.

With Franks at the helm, and with a force of 80 SAS on the ground, a new basecamp was established high in the mountains. From there, the Operation Loyton raiders launched bold hit-and-run missions, creating mayhem among enemy forces, while at the same time gathering intelligence from the locals. Franks split his men into smaller groups, sticking to the wild off-beaten tracks, as the hunt intensified. Icy rain and a lack of cold-weather gear added to their difficulties, but with the enemy on their tail they were forced to keep moving.

At this point, Franks decided it was time to draw on the SAS's reputation for audacious nerve. The prior success of the SAS across the Middle East had been down to fast 'shoot and scoot' operations executed in heavily armed Willys Jeeps. If those vehicles could be parachuted into the Vosges, the men could ambush German staff cars and their high-ranking officers, and 'cut the head off the Nazi snake'.

With six jeeps dropped in, Franks led a force of 21 fighters on the first raid on 22 September 1944. Among others, Fiddick and Druce lay in wait, their vehicles bristling with Vickers machine guns. Their patience was rewarded. Around the distant bend, not one but three gleaming Wehrmacht staff cars emerged, followed by a three-tonne German Army truck full of escorting soldiers.

Holding their fire until the very last moment, the twin-muzzles of the Vickers ripped through the sleek bodywork of the staff cars before targeting the truck. As more of the convoy emerged, the SAS broke off the attack, the unwieldy trucks being no match for the nimble jeeps.

Stunned by the attack, the enemy set out for revenge. Failing to find the SAS raiders, they accused the villagers of Moussey of assisting them. Some 210 men aged 16 to 60 were deported to the concentration camps. Only a few dozen survivors would ever return. Despite this, members of the Resistance

"UPON SEEING THE TWO SAS FUGITIVES' TOMMY GUNS AND THEIR RESOLVE, THE MILITIAMEN BACKED OFF"

continued to risk their lives to bring the SAS vital intelligence.

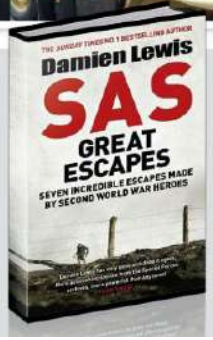
Due to their efforts, Colonel Franks obtained priceless documents delineating the 21st Panzer Division's order of battle and positions. In the right hands, such intelligence would give the Allies the chance to hit Nazi Germany's key defences here in the Vosges. Franks had to get these to US General George Patton's forces, who were even then preparing a fresh assault on the enemy in the Vosges.

To do so would entail crossing the heavily defended German and Allied lines – a daunting proposition. Fortunately, Franks knew just the man for the job: Captain Henry Carey Druce. Requesting a volunteer, Canadian flier and honorary SAS man Lew Fiddick offered to accompany him.

Below: WWII SAS veteran Jack Mann, with French parachutists, in the Vosges in 2017. Every year a joint Anglo-French memorial service is held to commemorate the sacrifice of those SAS lost on Operation Loyton, plus the hundreds of French civilians who also perished

© Damien Lewis

Damien's latest best-selling book *SAS Great Escapes: Seven Incredible Escapes Made by World War Two Heroes*, is available now in all good stores



On 29 September, the two men set off across enemy territory to reach American lines. The following evening, they arrived on the outskirts of the village of Saint-Prayel, location of the only bridge over the River Meurthe, on the far side of which lay the frontline. Waiting for darkness and using the cover of buildings and trees, they stole through the village but were challenged by members of the French Fascist militia – the Milice Francaise. But upon seeing the two SAS fugitives' Tommy guns and their resolve, the militiamen backed off, leaving Druce and Fiddick free to continue their journey.

Before long they found themselves in a dark German trench with patrols on every side. Making their way to the last trench they came to a barren stretch of terrain ripped apart by explosions. Fearful of being spotted by the enemy or accidentally detonating a landmine, they crawled across the blasted earth.

At first light, they discovered they'd reached a section of Allied front held by the 1st Spahis, part of the Free French forces under General de Gaulle. With identities confirmed, Druce and Fiddick were taken to American HQ where Druce finally handed over the precious documents.

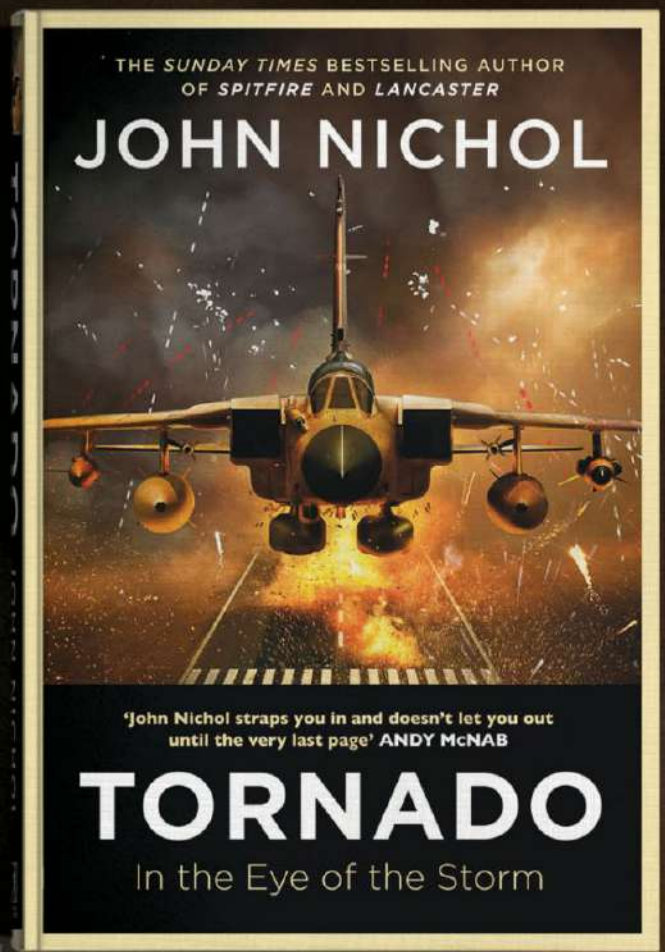
With Fiddick's epic escape, his behind-the-lines adventures had come to an end, but not so Druce. Armed with the knowledge of General Patton's impending offensive, Druce set off back along the perilous journey to re-join Colonel Franks. When he arrived, he found the SAS camp deserted and Moussey village swarming with German troops.

A Resistance member warned Druce that following an attack by the enemy, Franks and his group had split into small parties to make their way back to Allied lines. Druce had no option but to follow their example. For the third time, he crossed back through enemy lines, bringing more intelligence to Allied forces.

Druce would be awarded a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his extraordinary achievements, while Fiddick would spend the rest of the war training new bomber crews before returning to civilian life in Canada.

A STORM IS COMING

The story of the RAF's Tornado force during the 1991 Gulf War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CHARLES H. COOLIDGE

In the autumn of 1944, in the Vosges Mountains of eastern France, this Technical Sergeant led an outnumbered group of GIs who stood their ground against repeated German attacks

WORDS: MICHAEL E. HASKEW

The pair of Nazi tanks rumbled forward and lurched to a halt. Cautiously opening his hatch, the commander of the nearest armoured vehicle emerged and shouted in perfect English, "Do you guys want to give up?"

A scant 50 feet away, Technical Sergeant Charles H. Coolidge, a hardened combat veteran at the age of 23, replied without hesitation, "I'm sorry, Mac. You've got to come and get me."

The response was borne much more of grim determination than bravado. This was the fourth day that a small, beleaguered contingent of American soldiers had held onto precious high ground in the Vosges Mountains of eastern France amid miserable rain and cold and repeated German attempts to dislodge them from the position that guarded the extreme right flank of the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Division.

Coolidge had joined comrades of Company M, 3rd Battalion in April 1943, just before deployment to North Africa. The 36th 'Texas' Infantry Division, a pre-war component of the Texas National Guard, was populated primarily with soldiers from the Lone Star state. Coolidge was a Tennessean, but his leadership and personal heroism had already demonstrated without doubt that he was more than worthy of being counted among them. He had landed with them in Italy, endured the harrowing effort to cross the Rapido River in January 1944, and fought the tenacious German defenders in the vicinity of Monte Cassino and the bloody Anzio beachhead that spring.

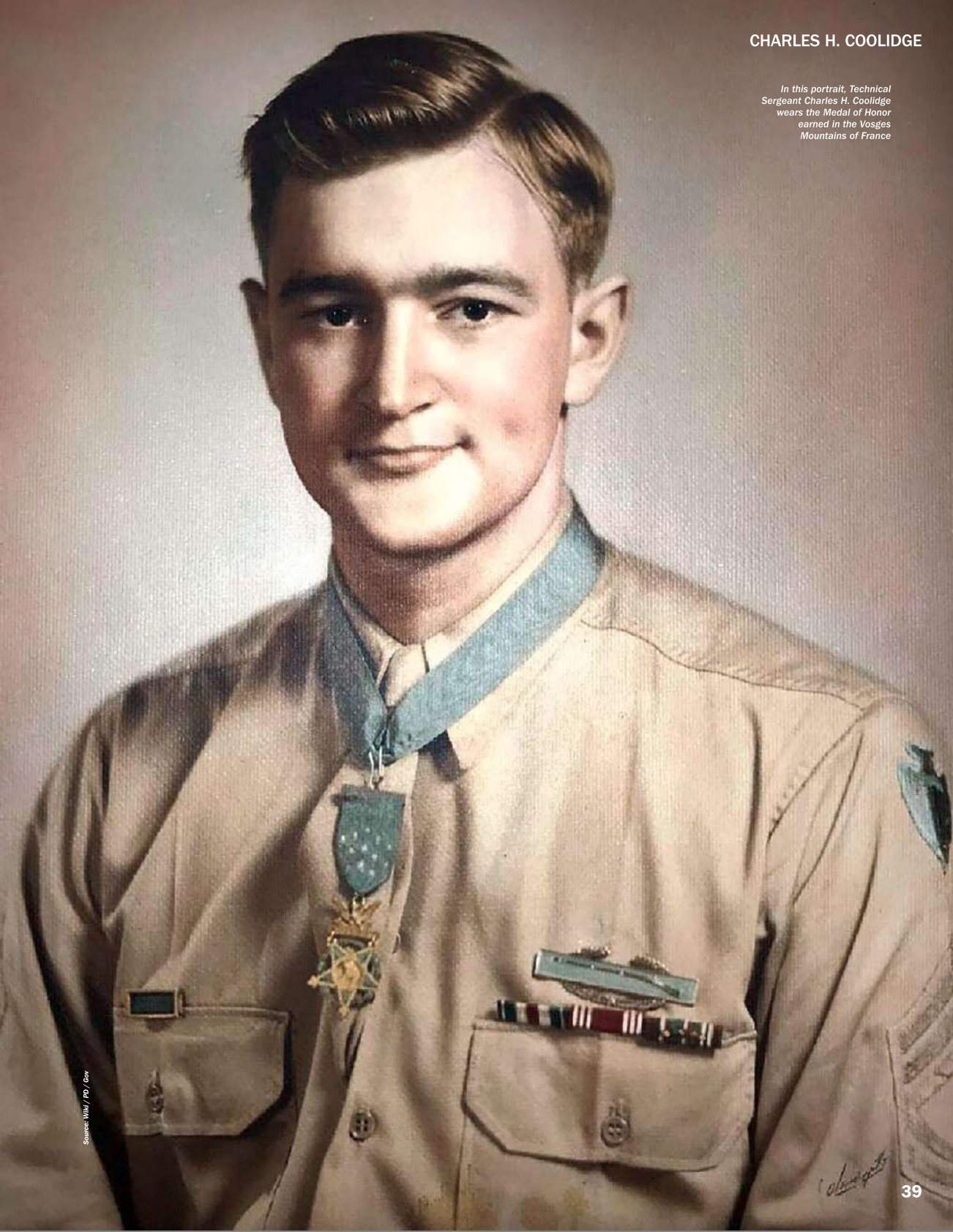
On 31 May 1944, Coolidge earned a Silver Star as he led a machine-gun section in action while supporting a rifle company near the town of Velletri, Italy. Moving to within 25 yards of the enemy, the machine-gunners used free traverse to devastating effect, killing and wounding many while scooping up prisoners as well during the reduction of a German strong point.

> "ALL FREE PEOPLE MOURN THE LOSS OF THIS GREAT MAN. HE, ALONG WITH HIS FELLOW SERVICE MEMBERS, SAVED OUR REPUBLIC DURING WORLD WAR II. MAY HE REST IN ETERNAL PEACE. HE EARNED IT"
>
> **General B.B. Bell, Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center national advisory board**

By autumn, the soldiers of the 36th Division had participated in their third amphibious landing, Operation Dragoon, on the shores of southern France. They had fought their way into the rugged, heavily wooded Vosges, approaching the frontier with Germany and the fortifications of the Siegfried Line, or West Wall, that guarded the boundary. On 24 October, the 3rd Battalion had taken up positions near the tactically vital Hill 623. Coolidge was ordered to take a machine-gun section along with a platoon of infantrymen from Company L to occupy the hill, near the village of Belmont-sur-Buttant, and hold against any German attempt to push them off. Altogether, he had fewer than 30 men, and most of them were 'green' replacements who had yet to fire a shot in anger.

While his men were setting up a pair of machine guns, the unmistakable sound of approaching enemy soldiers made Coolidge pause for a moment. He turned to his friend and fellow veteran Sergeant, George Ferguson, a native of the Bronx, New York, who was fluent in German. "George," he whispered, "ask them if they want to give up."

Peering through the mist, Coolidge watched as the Germans, probably in company strength,



In this portrait, Technical Sergeant Charles H. Coolidge wears the Medal of Honor earned in the Vosges Mountains of France

Source: Wiki / PD / Gov

approached to a mere 40 feet from his exposed position. He hoped that the bluff would work, but in seconds the answer came. “He [Ferguson] started talking to them, and all at once I saw one of the Germans behind a tree getting ready to shoot George. I took my carbine and shot him – and then shot another one.”

The pair began to slip away just as a German bullet slapped into Ferguson’s arm. Coolidge dragged his wounded friend to an aid station, and then rushed to his men, dug in on the slope of Hill 623. Without immediate support, Coolidge knew that his handful of defenders were in dire straights. Nevertheless, he steadied them as best he could, moving among the foxholes and pointing at clusters of enemy troops, encouraging and motivating his men to maintain their composure.

Coolidge never wavered, and earned the Medal of Honor during the desperate fight on Hill 623. His citation reads in part: “Many of the men were replacements recently arrived; this was their first experience under fire. TSgt. Coolidge, unmindful of the enemy fire delivered at close range, walked along the position calming and encouraging his men and directing their fire.”

For more than 72 hours, the German attacks ebbed and flowed, and Coolidge was a constant presence among the young defenders. He expected that the Germans might bring tanks forward, possibly a heavy Tiger with its dreaded 88mm cannon, to assault Hill 623, and he knew that there were few weapons available to counter enemy armour. Nevertheless, the determined Americans held their position against at least half a dozen assaults, and ammunition ran low.

On 27 October, Coolidge heard the ominous rumble of enemy tanks. Staff Sergeant Clarence B. Hawkins, leading a rifle squad, could not believe his eyes. “The situation was desperate. Sergeant Coolidge saw there was at least a company of Germans and something had to be done. He stepped in front of us and walked right at the Germans, yelling to them to surrender. You’d think he had an army behind him.”

Years later, Coolidge remembered, “I can still see him doing it” as the German tanker “unbuttoned” his hatch to deliver the cold ultimatum. After declining the German’s overture, Coolidge scrambled for cover. “He put the turret of that tank down. He turned that 88 right where I’d been standing, and he fired point blank.”

The German tank fired four more times as Coolidge evaded shrapnel and splinters from the smashed trees. A shard of hot steel cut through the leather top of his GI boot, but he remained unhurt. “When a shot went one way, I went the other,” he recalled.

Coolidge found a shoulder-fired bazooka, the heaviest available anti-tank weapon, but it was inoperable, since the batteries had been removed from the firing mechanism. Tossing the bazooka aside, he gathered as many hand grenades as he could carry. While his men fell back grudgingly, Coolidge crawled toward the oncoming Germans, hoping to buy time.

Back home in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, near the city of Chattanooga, Technical Sergeant

During a ceremony in Germany, Technical Sergeant Charles H. Coolidge receives the Medal of Honor from Lieutenant General Wade Haislip

“TSGT. COOLIDGE, DISPLAYING GREAT COOLNESS AND COURAGE, DIRECTED AND CONDUCTED AN ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL, BEING HIMSELF THE LAST TO LEAVE THE POSITION”

Medal of Honor citation

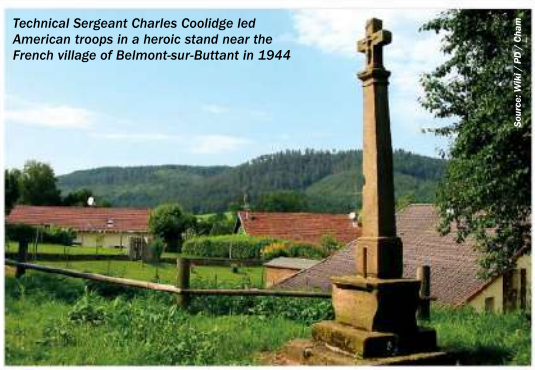
Source: WWI / PD / Gov

Soldiers of the US 36th Infantry Division come ashore in Italy in 1943. They later landed in southern France

Source: Wiki / PD / Gov

World War II Medal of Honor recipient Charles Coolidge is greeted in this 2014 photo

Source: Wiki / PD / Gov



Technical Sergeant Charles Coolidge led American troops in a heroic stand near the French village of Belmont-sur-Buttant in 1944

Source: Wiki / PD / Cham

Coolidge was known as an accomplished softball pitcher. That day in the Vosges, he put the skill to work with lethal results. Tossing as many as 70 grenades, he killed at least 20 German soldiers, and was the last defender to withdraw from the position. Incredibly, no American life was lost during the ordeal, and the integrity of the 3rd Battalion line was maintained. Coolidge, already in combat areas for 14 months, stayed with his soldiers through the end of the war in May 1945.

In one of the few such ceremonies conducted in Europe, Coolidge received his country's highest decoration for bravery under fire at a bombed-out airfield near Dornstadt, Germany, on 18 June 1945. Lieutenant General Wade H. Haislip, commander of the US Seventh Army, presented the Medal of Honor.

After the war, Coolidge returned home and worked briefly for the Veterans Administration, before rejoining the family business, Chattanooga Printing & Engraving, where he had been a bookbinder prior to entering the service. He married Frances Seepe in 1945 and raised three children. Their son, Charles Coolidge Jr, rose to the rank of lieutenant general in the US Air Force. Although he suffered from multiple sclerosis for the last 50 years of his life, Sergeant Coolidge was a vibrant presence in the Chattanooga area throughout. Always humble and soft spoken, he addressed many school and civic groups, telling them that in combat, "…there are a lot of people scared to death, especially if you're a replacement…" and frankly asserting, "There's no glory in the infantry."

A Chattanooga area highway and park have been named for the hero, as well as the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center, which opened its doors in February 2020. When the US Postal Service unveiled its 'World War II Medal of Honor Forever Stamp' packet in November 2013, Coolidge was the first of 12 recipients whose portraits appeared on the cover sheet.

Prior to his death on 6 April 2021 at the age of 99, Coolidge was the oldest living recipient of the Medal of Honor, the last remaining recipient from the European Theater of Operations, and the last to have received his medal prior to the end of World War II. Hundreds of citizens lined the streets of Chattanooga as his funeral procession made its way to the city's national cemetery, where he was buried with full military honours.

A short distance from Coolidge's final resting place lie the first recipients of the Medal of Honor, participants in the 1862 Great Locomotive Chase during the American Civil War.

LATIN KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM (MODERN-DAY ISRAEL) 5 AUGUST 1192

JAFFA

Richard the Lionheart's tactical genius enabled his army to repulse Sultan Saladin's horse-archers in the last great clash of the Third Crusade

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

The Franks were perennially short of troops in the Holy Land to hold the four crusader states established after the First Crusade. Because of this, they could ill afford a major defeat against their Muslim foes on the field of battle. Although the multinational Christian armies of the First and Second Crusades numbered tens of thousands of troops, the majority returned home after their respective Crusade came to a close. This left only a small number of Franks to hold a large swath of territory in the holy land.

After the untimely death of the 10-year-old Shia Fatimid Caliph Al-Adid in 1171, his Sunni Kurdish vizier called Ayyubid Sultan Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub – better known to history as Saladin – wrested control of Egypt. This changed the balance of power in the region decisively in favour of the Muslims.

Saladin had grown up in Syria, where his family had served first Imad al-Din Zengi, the Oghuz Turkish governor of Aleppo, and later his second son, Emir Nur ad-Din, the governor of Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. Upon Nur ad-Din's death in 1174, Saladin began campaigning in Syria. By the early 1180s, he had succeeded in conquering both Damascus and Aleppo. It was the first time that the Franks faced a single Muslim ruler who controlled the military resources of both Egypt and Syria.

Meanwhile, the Latin footprint in the holy land was shrinking. The Zengid Turks had completed their conquest of the northernmost crusader state, the County of Edessa, over a six-year period ending in 1150. Of the three remaining crusader states, the Principality of Antioch, County of Tripoli and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the latter was most powerful. Its king was the overall leader of all three crusader states. He ruled from Jerusalem, and occupied the bustling port of Acre: one of the finest harbours on the Levantine coast.

While Saladin was building his power, the crusader states suffered from a lack of strong leadership. Guy of Lusignan, who ascended to the throne in 1186 through his marriage to Queen Sibylla, was an inept commander. This became glaringly apparent when Saladin soundly defeated his 20,000-strong crusader army at Hattin in Galilee with his 30,000 Muslim horsemen on 4 July 1187.

> "PHILIP II AND RICHARD I 'LIONHEART' ARRIVED AT ACRE IN SPRING 1191 WITH LARGE ARMIES THAT MADE THE FALL OF THE PORT-CITY INEVITABLE"

Saladin captured Guy and many of his soldiers at Hattin. The sultan subsequently imprisoned Guy in Damascus until such time as the Franks paid his ransom. Guy had stripped the garrisons of many of his fortified towns and castles to fill the ranks of his army, and therefore after his defeat most of the strongholds lacked defenders to hold out against Saladin's forces.

The victorious sultan embarked on a sweeping offensive after Hattin, capturing Acre, Jaffa, Sidon, Beirut and Ascalon – all ports through which supplies flowed to the Kingdom of Jerusalem. His capture of Jerusalem on 2 October boded ill for the Latin crusader states. Unless well-led Frankish reinforcements arrived soon, the Kingdom of Jerusalem might soon fall to the Muslims.

Crusaders retake Acre

Pope Gregory VIII issued a papal bull on 29 October calling for the Third Crusade. The three most powerful rulers in Western Europe, Philip II of France, Henry II of England, and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I 'Barbarossa', all agreed to take the cross and lead an army of Christian soldiers to the Holy Land in a bid to recover Jerusalem and roll back Saladin's gains.

The Franks paid Guy's ransom after one year of captivity. To his credit, Guy scraped together a small army and besieged Acre, even though he lacked enough troops to surround it by land. He intended the siege to serve as a starting point for the recovery of Palestine and Jerusalem. He simply needed to hold on until large-scale reinforcements arrived.

Meanwhile, Frederick Barbarossa died in an accident while marching through Anatolia with his army. Most of his troops returned home, and the Germans played a very minor role in the remainder of the Third Crusade.

Philip II and Richard I 'Lionheart', who had succeeded his late father to the throne, arrived at Acre in spring 1191 with large armies that made the fall of the port-city inevitable. Employing the best siege tactics of the time, as well as a tight naval blockade, the two monarchs defeated the 3,000 Muslim garrison troops in July of that year.

Philip departed for home on 3 August. As a result, Richard became the undisputed ruler of the Third Crusade, given that Guy, who hailed from Poitou, was Richard's vassal.

Although he failed to capture Jerusalem, Richard the Lionheart retook many strongholds from Saladin during the Third Crusade

© Alamy

The 34-year-old king of England possessed a remarkable grasp of military tactics, which he had refined in fratricidal warfare with his father while defending his Angevin inheritance. Richard lusted for battle, and his bold leadership inspired his troops.

Rather than marching directly to Jerusalem from Acre, which would have taken his army through hill country, where it might be ambushed in narrow defiles, Richard opted to march his crusaders south along the coast to the Palestinian port of Jaffa. Once he had secured Jaffa, Richard would decide on the best approach to capturing Jerusalem.

Richard's 10,000 Anglo-Norman and French crusaders, most of who were on foot, save for 300 mounted knights, set out for Jaffa five days later. The army travelled in three divisions, with the crossbowmen and spearmen marching on the outside and the mounted knights and baggage train on the inside, and the shoreline protecting their right flank. In order to strengthen his marching column, Richard assigned the disciplined Templars and Hospitallers to lead the vanguard and rearguard respectively.

Saladin's horse-archers harassed the crusader army on a nearly daily basis in an effort to goad Richard's mounted knights into launching charges that might allow the Muslim horsemen to isolate, encircle and destroy them. As the Franks drew close to Jaffa, Saladin grew increasingly desperate, his harassment tactics not producing results. For that reason, he decided to commit his army to a large-scale attack near the Forest of Arsuf on 7 September.

Richard crushes Saladin at Arsuf

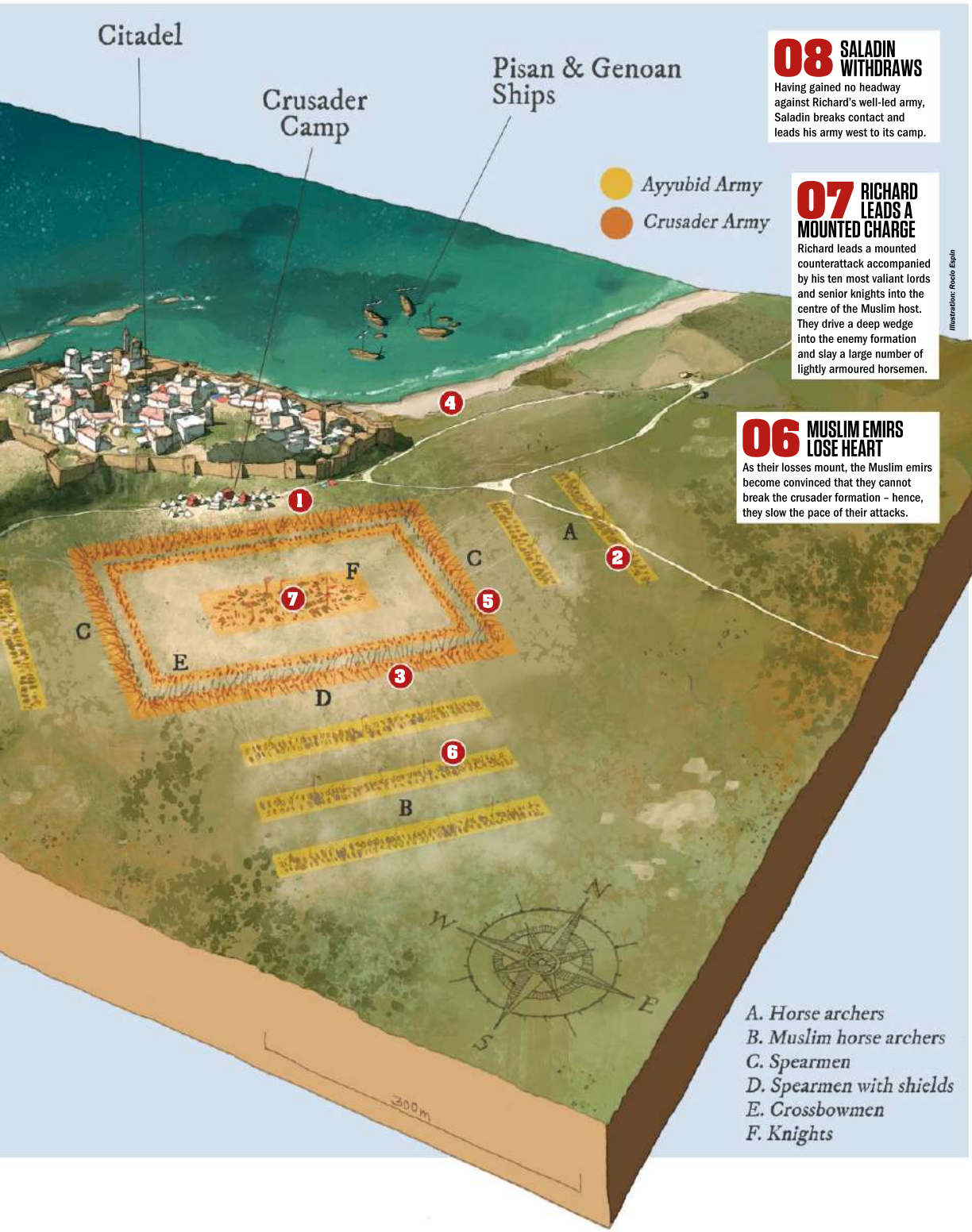
In the ensuing pitched battle at Arsuf, Richard's foot soldiers shielded his knights from the waves of attacking Muslim light cavalry. When the horse-archers had exhausted their mounts, Richard led his heavy cavalry in two charges that inflicted heavy losses on Saladin's field army. The Muslims suffered 7,000 casualties, while Richard's Christians lost just 700 men.

The crusaders reached Jaffa two days later. Richard put his men to work rebuilding the town's defences, which Saladin had previously ordered dismantled. While this work was under way, Richard planned his advance on Jerusalem.

Richard and troops prepare to storm the beach at Jaffa

© Alamy

Jaffa
5 August, 1192
Sand Bars
01 CRUSADER SOLDIER SOUNDS ALERT
A Genoan soldier alerts the crusader camp at first light that Saladin's army is about to attack. Richard deploys his foot soldiers and dismounted knights in a hedgehog formation, with spearmen in the front rank and crossbowmen in the second rank.
02 HORSE-ARCHERS LOOSE SHOWERS OF ARROWS
The Muslim horse-archers in the front ranks of Saladin's army advance towards the crusaders and shower them from three sides with flights of arrows in an attempt to thin their ranks, but the foot soldiers use their kite-shaped shields to protect them from the light arrows.
2
8
A
03 CRUSADER SPEARMEN HOLD THEIR GROUND
The Muslim horse-archers make repeated headlong charges against the crusader lines. When the spearmen in the front rank of the crusader army hold their ground and do not flinch, the horse-archers turn aside and ride across the front of the enemy lines, shooting arrows at close range.
04 RICHARD THWARTS MUSLIM FLANK ATTACK
Richard observes some of Saladin's soldiers on foot attempting to infiltrate the town from the north in a flanking move. He rushes with a picked force to the shoreline, where he and his men drive them off.
05 CRUSADER SPEARMEN STAB HORSE-ARCHERS
The crusader crossbowmen inflict significant casualties on the horse-archers as they ride along the Christian lines. Richard eventually orders his spearmen to lunge forward and attack the horse-archers that pass by them.


Citadel
Crusader Camp
Pisan & Genoan Ships
Ayyubid Army
Crusader Army
08 SALADIN WITHDRAWS
Having gained no headway against Richard's well-led army, Saladin breaks contact and leads his army west to its camp.
07 RICHARD LEADS A MOUNTED CHARGE
Richard leads a mounted counterattack accompanied by his ten most valiant lords and senior knights into the centre of the Muslim host. They drive a deep wedge into the enemy formation and slay a large number of lightly armoured horsemen.
06 MUSLIM EMIRS LOSE HEART
As their losses mount, the Muslim emirs become convinced that they cannot break the crusader formation – hence, they slow the pace of their attacks.
Illustration: Rocío Espín
A. Horse archers
B. Muslim horse archers
C. Spearmen
D. Spearmen with shields
E. Crossbowmen
F. Knights
300m

Saladin's reputation as a military commander waned in the wake of his defeat at Arsuf. The loss convinced Saladin's warriors that they could not win in a pitched battle against the crusaders, particularly if Richard was to lead the crusaders in another open-field battle.

Meanwhile, Saladin began to prepare the defence of Jerusalem. In mid-September, the Ayyubid sultan withdrew Muslim troops and civilians from the port of Ascalon 30 miles south of Jaffa. Before his troops pulled out of Ascalon, Saladin ordered his men to dismantle the port's fortifications in order to deny them to the crusaders.

Richard initiated peace negotiations with Saladin's ministers in October 1191. Although as a pious Muslim, Saladin would never consider a permanent peace with the Franks, he was amenable to a long-term truce. The English king believed that if he could compel Saladin to willingly evacuate Jerusalem in exchange for other territory, he might avoid a lengthy siege. But the talks bore no fruit that autumn.

Richard led his crusaders west towards Jerusalem on 22 December. They came to within seven miles of the Holy City when Saladin received heavy reinforcements from Egypt. Believing Saladin's army covering Jerusalem was too large to defeat, Richard withdrew his army to Jaffa in mid-January 1192. Morale in the crusader ranks plummeted as a result.

To raise the morale of his troops, Richard marched his army to Ascalon in late January. Ascalon, which had a better anchorage than Jaffa, became his base for the next five months. He set his troops to work rebuilding its fortifications, and morale was restored.

The establishment of a crusader stronghold at Ascalon annoyed Saladin. He demanded that Richard dismantle the fortifications, but Richard refused to do so. This dispute hindered the progress of their continuing negotiations.

In mid-June, the Frankish crusader army advanced on Jerusalem for a second time. During the second advance, Richard's crusaders intercepted a large Muslim caravan journeying from Cairo to Jerusalem. The plunder included hundreds of camels and baggage horses, which the crusaders desperately needed for their war effort.

Saladin storms Jaffa

Despite this success, Richard realised that he lacked the manpower to successfully undertake a lengthy siege of Jerusalem, and also protect his supply line to the sea while the siege was under way. Consequently, he withdrew to the coast a second time on 4 July 1192.

At that point, Richard began to contemplate less challenging military objectives that would strengthen the waning power of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Believing the Muslim-held port of Beirut to be an easier target than Jerusalem, he left a small garrison at Jaffa and led his army back to Acre to prepare for an attack on that objective.

As soon as the Franks departed Jaffa, Saladin besieged the town on 27 July. The garrison commander sent a messenger to

King Richard the Lionheart and his knights overwhelm the Muslim cavalry beneath the walls of Jaffa

"THE BLOODTHIRSTY RELIEF FORCE AND THE GARRISON, WHO WERE BENT ON REVENGE, SLAUGHTERED MOST OF THE MUSLIMS IN THE TOWN"

Acre immediately to implore Richard to come to their aid as soon as possible. Richard dispatched Count Henry of Champagne, his trusted nephew, to lead a relief column overland to Jaffa. The column, which included Templars and Hospitallers, set out on 29 July, but its advance was blocked at Caesarea by a second Muslim army.

Richard decided to lead another relief force by sea to Jaffa. He boarded his red-hulled flagship with its crimson sails adorned with the royal coat of three golden lions, while the rest of his troops boarded the Italian vessels that constituted the bulk of the naval squadron.

Saladin's troops successfully stormed Jaffa on 30 July. The Frankish garrison withdrew to the walled port's inner citadel to await relief. Saladin pressured the Christian troops in the citadel into agreeing to surrender the fortress if they were not relieved by mid-afternoon on 1 August.

Richard's squadron arrived in the harbour at Jaffa on the evening of 31 July. When looking out from his ship the following morning, he saw the shoreline lined with Muslim soldiers. Although Richard observed what appeared to be a signal from the garrison for him to come ashore, he was reluctant to do so, for he feared it was a trick. But when a priest swam out to the fleet at midday and informed Richard that the garrison was still holding out, the English king resolved to attack at once.

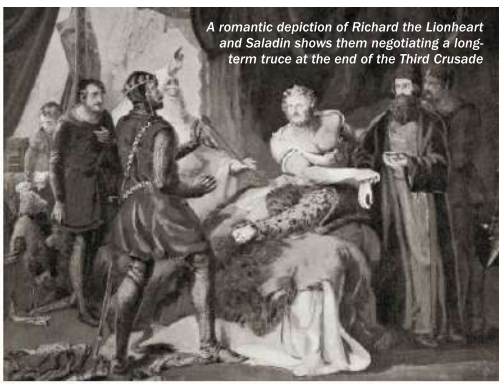
Lionheart retakes Jaffa

Richard ordered the captain of his flagship to sail as close to the shore as possible. He and his Anglo-Norman soldiers and Italian sailors and marines fought their way ashore. The English king then detailed a portion of his force to build a palisade to secure the beach. "[They] took barrels and beams and wide planks, old galleys and old barges and made a barrier across the strand between them and the Saracens," wrote Norman chronicler Ambroise.

Richard then led a hand-picked group of soldiers in an assault on the town by way of a winding staircase near the beach that led directly into the Templar quarters in Jaffa. Fighting as they went, they were joined by the garrison that sallied forth from the citadel. The bloodthirsty relief force and the garrison, who were bent on revenge, slaughtered most of the Muslims in the town and drove the remainder out of the eastern gate.

Saladin's pavilion was situated outside of Jaffa, and he was not present when Richard and his men fought their way ashore. He berated the officers in charge of the forces inside the town when he learned that it was

Richard the Lionheart leads a charge against Saladin's horsemen in the Battle of Arsuf



A romantic depiction of Richard the Lionheart and Saladin shows them negotiating a long-term truce at the end of the Third Crusade

The arrival of King Richard I of England and King Philip II of France at Acre in 1191, with their large armies, hastened its fall to the crusaders

Images © Alamy

"[RICHARD'S] SWORD SHONE LIKE LIGHTNING AND MANY OF THE TURKS FELT ITS EDGE"

Richard and his Anglo-Norman crusaders fight their way ashore at Jaffa to retake the town

© Alamy

once again in Frankish hands. After a weak counterattack to recapture the town failed, Saladin withdrew his forces five miles to the west, where he established a new camp.

Richard put his men to work over the course of the next three days repairing the walls of Jaffa that had been damaged by Saladin's catapults in his brief assault on the town. In a bid to further humiliate his nemesis, the English king ordered his troops to camp on the very spot occupied by Saladin. By bivouacking outside of the town's walls, Richard was offering battle to Saladin if he should want to try to retake Jaffa.

Saladin would soon take him up on that offer. The sultan wanted to try to capture Jaffa before Richard's small force was heavily reinforced by Henry of Champagne's army with its Templar and Hospitaller companies. Although the knights of the two military orders remained behind, Henry and his personal troops boarded transport ships and set sail for Jaffa to assist Richard.

The Muslim emirs who commanded the contingents that made up Saladin's Muslim army were reluctant to engage Richard again after their humiliating defeat at Arsuf. Despite their misgivings about going up against Richard again, the emirs heeded Saladin's orders to launch a surprise attack against the crusader camp at dawn on 5 August.

Crusaders repulse Saladin's counterattack

Saladin's surprise attack did not come off as well as it might have. The Mamluks and Kurds, who were the best groups of soldiers in Saladin's army, fell to bickering with each other during their night march, and their protracted argument delayed their getting into position before sunrise.

The argument was over what group of troops would have to dismount some of their soldiers to infiltrate the town of Jaffa while the main battle was underway outside the town. Neither group of proud cavalrymen wanted to fight on foot. "They came arguing down the valley and their quarrel lasted so long between them that they saw the day dawn," wrote Ambroise.

When the call to arms was made in the crusader camp, Richard formed his troops in a hedgehog formation in which the troops faced outward in all directions so that the Muslim horse-archers could not get behind them or outflank them.

He ordered his spearmen to plant their spears at an angle in the sandy soil and stay low behind their kite-shaped shields to protect themselves from the thick flights of Muslim arrows. He then ordered his crossbowmen to work in pairs at intervals behind the spearmen. One would draw the crossbow while the other shot. This way, the crusaders would be able to sustain a rapid rate of missile shots.

Since Richard's army had fewer than a dozen war horses by that time, Richard ordered his approximately 50 dismounted knights to fight on the front lines. Meanwhile, Richard and his ten mounted knights positioned themselves inside the hedgehog formation, where they served as a reactionary force.

Although Saladin had a large army that heavily outnumbered Richard's army, only a fraction saw action that day. Most of Saladin's troops were horse-archers, and the few hundred Mamluk and Kurdish troops, the former of whom were Saladin's bodyguards, were typically held in reserve until victory was certain.

Two factors worked against Saladin that day. First, the horse-archers disliked having to fight massed crusader infantry. Their horses would not charge into a wall of spears. Second, the horse-archers' light arrows were no match for the crusaders' heavier crossbow bolts in a close-range contest.

After they rode throughout the long morning along the outside of the crusader formation, shooting arrows as they went by, the Muslim horse-archers began tiring, and their losses piled up from the crossbow shots. Richard eventually ordered his spearmen to stab the enemy horses and riders when they came within striking distance of the front rank.

When the Muslim attack began to slow, Richard sallied forth on horseback with his fellow lords, including Henry of Champagne and Earl Robert of Leicester, and hacked their way into the front ranks of the Muslim host.

Although their initial charge would have been made with lances, once the lances shattered, the Christian lords would have resorted to their broadswords. The Anglo-Norman chronicles waxed eloquently about Richard's feats that day. After their initial charge, they pushed on, hewing and slashing at those Muslim horse-archers who did not get out of the way in time.

"[Richard's] sword shone like lightning and many of the Turks felt its edge," read a contemporary Anglo-Norman chronicle. "Some were cloven in two from their helmet to their teeth; others lost their heads, arms, and limbs, lopped off at a single blow….Whoever felt one of his blows had no need of a second." After suffering this last humiliation, Saladin withdrew, leaving Jaffa in Richard's hands.

Richard negotiates a truce

Although the Third Crusade did not result in the recovery of Jerusalem, it did result in the revitalisation of a viable crusader state, known as the Kingdom of Acre, which succeeded the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Richard retook enough strongholds in Palestine, Galilee and Lebanon to allow the Kingdom of Acre to survive for nearly all of the 13th century.

He is remembered during the Third Crusade not only for playing a pivotal role in the successful siege of Acre, but also for defeating Saladin twice in set-piece battles at Arsuf and Jaffa. Having negotiated an equitable truce with Saladin in September 1192 that allowed Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem, Richard departed for home the following month.

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GURKHAS IN HELMAND

WORDS: TOM GARNER

Soldier and author Captain Kailash Limbu tells his extraordinary story of leaving Nepal to join the British Army and surviving five combat tours in Afghanistan

Kailash Limbu pictured during his active service in Afghanistan

The War in Afghanistan was one of the most testing deployments for the British Army in recent years. First sent as part of a NATO-led coalition in 2001 to find the leaders of al-Qaeda after 9/11, the British were part of an intervention that toppled the ruling Taliban regime. Afghanistan next required redevelopment, with security being provided by the British in the southern province of Helmand from 2006. Helmand eventually became a byword for the British struggle against the resurgent Taliban. In a mission that turned increasingly violent, a total of 454 British personnel were killed in Afghanistan during 2001-14.

Among the British troops fighting in Helmand were among the most professional soldiers in the world: the Gurkhas. Nepal's fearsome warriors have fought for Britain for over 200 years and have a reputation for extreme courage. Now formed into the Brigade of Gurkhas in the British Army, these famously fierce soldiers served with distinction in Afghanistan. Among them was a young NCO in the Royal Gurkha Rifles: Kailash Limbu.

Originally from a remote Nepalese village, Limbu undertook five tours of active service in Afghanistan. The majority of these were in Helmand, where he survived many dangerous missions against the Taliban. Still a serving soldier in the British Army, Limbu describes resupplying a besieged garrison under fire, surviving an ambush, assaulting a hillside position and the exceptional comradeship of the Gurkhas.

"Life was difficult"

Limbu was born in the village of Khebang, Nepal, in 1981. He grew up in the foothills of the Himalayas in the northeast of the country, less than 50km away from the third-highest mountain in the world: Kangchenjunga. His upbringing was rural and remote. "My life was completely different compared to what my kids have experienced in Britain," he says. "I would do some housework every morning, such as bringing grass to feed cattle and chickens. I'd finish that at 8.30am and had to do it before I went to school. Life was difficult, sometimes quite scary, but it was fun."

Because of Khebang's isolation, Limbu's initial ambition was to train in medicine.

"NEPAL'S FEARSOME WARRIORS HAVE FOUGHT FOR BRITAIN FOR OVER 200 YEARS AND HAVE A REPUTATION FOR EXTREME COURAGE"

"I wanted to become a doctor because our village was really remote," he says. "It used to take two days to travel by foot before you could get transport and many people were dying because they did not receive good medical treatment out there. I was really very keen but my ambitions changed to join the British Army."

Limbu was particularly inspired in his career choice by his grandfather: "He was a British Gurkha in India and talked about lots of things such as the guns. He was good at shooting and could hit targets very accurately. When I heard those stories I was really keen to join."

After a rigorous selection process, Limbu was picked from thousands of other applicants to join the Gurkhas in the British Army and was recruited in 1999. Along with other new recruits he was flown to Britain from Nepal for training. He recalls how different British life was: "There were so many things I had never seen before. The plane was bigger than a house, so that in itself was fascinating for me. When we arrived in Britain I remember how cold it was but even the bus from the airport was nice. I had never seen one like that before because it was so clean and tidy."

Limbu trained at the home of the British Army in Aldershot, Hampshire, for nine months. This was a longer training period for the Gurkhas than for other British units. "The training is fundamentally the same across the British Army but we definitely had a longer period

A British Gurkha soldier keeps watch while on a foot patrol near Musa Qala, 27 March 2009

Opening image: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd

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of training than our counterparts," he says. "That longer time is important because of the different culture and traditions of the Gurkhas. That makes us different from other soldiers but in my opinion this should be continued."

Upon completing his training, Limbu joined 2nd Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles (2 RGR). Formed in 1994, the RGR is the sole infantry regiment in the British Brigade of Gurkhas, with 2nd Battalion consisting of light infantrymen. Limbu initially saw active service in Sierra Leone and Brunei before he was deployed for his first tour of Afghanistan in 2002.

Operation Herrick

2 RGR was dispatched to the northern Afghan province of Balkh, where Limbu was part of a Provisional Reconstruction Team. "We had to go into villages, find out what they needed and just try to help the local people," he says. "There wasn't much fighting at that time but there was a dispute between two local Afghan leaders so our job was to make sure that they didn't fight. We would collect their weapons and put them to one side to make peace. There was still a mild threat but we were not involved in much fighting."

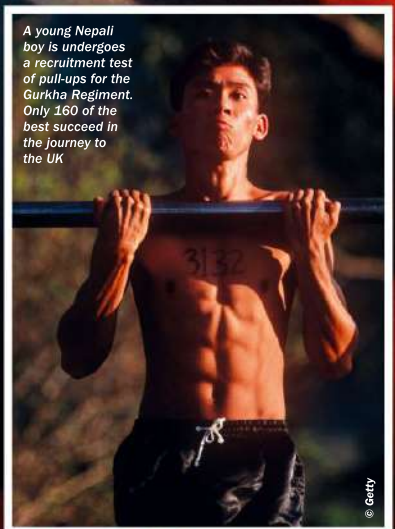
Limbu's first experience of Afghanistan may have been relatively uneventful but when he returned in 2006 the situation had intensified. Operation Herrick was the codename for all British military activities in Afghanistan from 2002, with the majority of their troops being based in Helmand Province. Working as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to support the US Army's Operation Enduring Freedom, the British established themselves at Camp Bastion.

A British Army airbase, Bastion opened in 2005. It grew into a huge complex that consisted of a landing strip and eventually housed over 20,000 personnel. The base was so big that it contained not just mess halls and showers but also shops and even a Pizza Hut takeaway restaurant. These surprisingly luxurious facilities caused the British troops to jokingly nickname Bastion 'Butlins' after the chain of UK seaside resorts.

Located northwest of the city of Lashkar Gah, Bastion was surrounded by Taliban insurgent activity. In spring 2006, 2 RGR's task was to help 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment, maintain a security zone in northern Helmand. Limbu recalls that the situation in Helmand was far more intense than what he had experienced in Balkh Province: "We knew it was going to be tense before we deployed but I didn't think about it too much. When we went there in a C-130 Hercules, we landed and all we could

Limbu (right, kneeling) with his bhaiharu (junior colleagues) in the desert after heavy contact with the enemy

Image: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd



A young Nepali boy is undergoes a recruitment test of pull-ups for the Gurkha Regiment. Only 160 of the best succeed in the journey to the UK

© Getty

***Below:** A Nepali boy is measured for lung capacity during a recruitment test for the British Brigade of Gurkhas at Pokhara, 16 January 1997*

© Getty

The doko race is one of the toughest challenges for applicants to pass to become a British Gurkha soldier

GURKHA RECRUITMENT

"YOU HAVE TO KEEP GOING"

Kailash Limbu was one of tens of thousands of Nepalese applicants who had to endure stiff competition and tough exercises to become a British Gurkha soldier

Becoming a Gurkha soldier in the British Army is a prized career choice for young Nepalese boys, although since 2020 female applicants have also been accepted. Thousands apply each year but there are only a few hundred vacancies to be filled. In 1999, Limbu was one of only 230 Gurkhas to be recruited out of 32,000 initial applicants from across Nepal.

To achieve this extremely competitive dream, Limbu had to undergo a vigorous selection process. Each recruit has to pass through three selection boards, although Limbu did not initially put much effort into his first selection. "At that point I did not do all the necessary requirements," he says. "For example, they wanted us to do 24 sit-ups but I could only do it 18 times because I didn't have much time to practice the exercise. I was focussing on other things but they did see potential in me."

A British officer encouraged Limbu to improve his fitness level, which stood him in good stead for the daunting District Selection. "At this stage there were over 1,000 applicants but there were only 14 places," he says. "Thirteen other people were called out but one place remained and my heart was pumping. My name was called out for the 14th place and I said, 'Yeah, I got it!'"

From District Selection, Limbu went to the final selection board at the British Gurkha Camp in Pokhara – Nepal's second-largest city. This time, the selection was mentally as well as physically challenging: "All of the applicants were put into a house and cut off from everything. There were no phones and you couldn't communicate with your parents but I was so focussed. I was determined to get in the British Army because you didn't know who was going to fail or pass."

The applicants had to now undertake various tests, the hardest being the doko race. "It's a running exercise with a load of weight on your back in a basket," says Limbu. "I was used to carrying a basket in my village to bring grass for the cattle or fuel for the fire. It wasn't new for me but the only difference was that the basket we used in Pokhara was smaller than the one I used at home."

The doko race required the applicants to run a long-distance stretch up a hill: "There is a river in Pokhara and you started in a flat rice paddy field. Then you had to climb straight up a steep hill while carrying 35kg. You had to run up that hill in a six-seven kilometre exercise. However, I never practised for it! I had heard little things about the race but I was really confident that I could do it and believed in myself. So many of my friends told me that they practised many times and came to Pokhara earlier to practise the route. It was exhausting climbing up that hill. I was almost knocked out because I had never trained like that but I just kept going and didn't give up. I finally finished and although I didn't come first I was somewhere in the middle."

Limbu's success in the doko race was a factor in his finally being accepted into the British Army. This was a huge achievement and reflected his determination to succeed: "You have to keep going and going. It was tough but I was willing to give everything to do this job."

© Getty

see was desert. You could start to hear in the far distance some Taliban trying to shoot into our base. We ended up being there for 31 days and there was fighting almost every day."

Now a corporal and section commander, Limbu was concerned for the Gurkhas under his command: "I was quite young at 25-26 years old but the soldiers in my section were all younger than me. You had the feeling of, 'What's going to happen?' You were trying to see the enemies but because of my team I was slightly anxious and – honestly – sometimes fearful too. However, I was also thinking, 'I'm going to kill them before they kill us.' We were prepared."

Sieges and ambushes

As well as Camp Bastion, fortified bases were also established in various districts of northern Helmand to stop insurgents overrunning the area. However, the Taliban laid siege to an ISAF garrison at Musa Qala, which was approximately 100km from Camp Bastion. The garrison was besieged for weeks and soon needed to be resupplied with provisions. It fell to the recently arrived soldiers of 2 RGR, including Limbu, to deliver supplies in what proved to be a dangerous mission.

The Gurkhas manned a convoy of 12 supply vehicles, including WMIKs, which were armed Land Rovers with mounted machine guns. They travelled through a hostile desert landscape before they were on the outskirts of Musa Qala. "As our convoy was heading that way we had a huge fight," says Limbu. "The Taliban used every weapon system to try and smash the logistics we were taking but our job was to protect those supplies and safely drop off our friendly assignment. We therefore used every weapon system and continually fought back. We won the firefight but our WMIK fell down into a dip and we had to fight hard. Nevertheless, we stopped the fighting, resupplied Musa Qala and turned back."

This pattern of intense firefights with the Taliban continued for 2 RGR across their tours in Afghanistan. On 8 March 2008, Limbu was based at FOB (Forward Operating Base) Delhi in the Garmsir district of Helmand. He came under extremely heavy attack during a clear-and-search mission on a day that happened to be his and his daughter's birthday. "We were operating to go south near to the Pakistani border," he says. "Our job was to clear the area, which was controlled by Taliban insurgents. We were at company strength for the mission and went by Chinook helicopter into the desert."

Limbu was at the head of a platoon, where he was the leading section commander of eight soldiers. Moving through shot-up houses, the Gurkhas were supported by patrol tactical vehicles and were in search of recently located enemy fighters. "As we were advancing we could hear the enemy talking through radio chatter, which kept getting busier and busier," he says. "They began plans to attack us and we knew that we were going to get into contact somewhere behind some building."

The Gurkhas were swiftly attacked with mortars: "Using all of our skills to make ourselves a small target we all of a sudden came into [enemy] contact and the fight began. It was quite a huge fight but we neutralised that one by calling for a long-range GPS-guided missile. We then continued advancing onto our next objective."

While the Gurkhas advanced through a landscape of buildings and a rubble-strewn roads, they were constantly under the threat of encountering IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices), which were homemade roadside bombs. Potential IEDs were soon detected near a T-junction and the vehicles were forced to halt: "I remember that the trucks stopped and

"AS I CLIMBED I JUST ENGAGED. BULLETS CAME DOWN AND WE SHOT BACK. WE BEGAN TO CLIMB INTO THE HILL AND WE WERE REALLY PUMPED UP. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN BUT WE WERE READY WITH OUR TEAM. ALL OF MY TEAM WERE REALLY READY TO SMASH THEM"

Limbu (right) pictured after returning from a resupply mission to Musa Qala in Helmand Province

Images: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd

British commando Lee Oliver fires at the Taliban who are located just 400 metres away in Helmand Province after an airstrike, 18 March 2007

© Getty

Limbu pictured in a poppy field with a local Afghan boy on a foot patrol south of FOB Delhi, 2009

"AS LONG AS WE HAVE UNITY THEN EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE. THAT'S WHY THE BROTHERHOOD WE HAVE IS UNIQUE. EVERYTHING WE DO, WE DO IT PURPOSEFULLY AS GURKHA BROTHERS"

Prince Harry (back) poses with Gurkha soldiers at an observation post close to FOB Delhi, January 2008

© Getty

"A GOOD TOOL"

The kukri is the Gurkha's signature weapon and a practical knife with origins linked to Alexander the Great

Known in Nepali as the khurkuri, the kukri is a type of machete with a distinctive recurve in its blade. It is the national weapon of Nepal but its history is at least 2,500 years old, with rumoured links to the Ancient Greeks. One legend is that the kukri's origins lie in Alexander the Great's invasion of India during 327-325 BCE. This is because the kukri bears a similar resemblance to the kopis: a heavy knife that was used by Alexander's cavalry. Another legend states that the kukri was in use before the arrival of Alexander by the Kirati people who inhabited what is now Nepal and India.

The British first encountered kukris when they fought the Gorkhali Army during the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16. The knives were continuously used in battle but the British saw the advantage of the weapon that was initially used against them when they began recruiting Gurkha regiments. The kukri has subsequently been used as a propaganda tool by the British Army to symbolise the elite fighting skills of the Gurkha soldiers.

All Gurkhas carry a kukri with them whether they are serving with the armies of Nepal, Britain, India or the Singapore Police Force. Approximately 38 centimetres in length, each knife takes at least one week to manufacture by skilled blacksmiths. The blade is made from high-quality steel while the handle can be made from wood, metal or animal horn. Every individual kukri also comes with two additional smaller knives at the top of the scabbard. The sharper of the two is called the karda, while the blunt knife is known as the chakmak. The former is a general purpose knife while the latter is used to start fires with a flint.

Although the kukri is known as a military weapon it is also a multi-purpose tool for many Nepalese men in peacetime. Limbu describes how he used the knife during childhood and how the Gurkhas use it in the British Army: "When I was born, the kukri was there and was used for tasks. This could be for cutting down things and to defend ourselves. I had my own kukri that I made in my home when I was young and carried it around. I made different kinds of kukris as well as the sheath. We learned how to use it in later years for close-quarters combat. It is easier for this sort of combat in many ways. Bayonets are great but the kukri is also a good tool. It's also easy to make something with in good or bad weather or to defend ourselves in battle."

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The kukri is not just the weapon but the emblem of the Gurkhas and is used as part of their army or police badges, insignia, flags and colours

© Getty

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles brandish their kukris at Sir John Moore Barracks in Folkestone, Kent, 19 July 2007

on the right and left were a number of houses that were quite high buildings."

Now exposed in a vulnerable position, Limbu had to decide how to clear the potential devices from signs on the ground: "My sense straightaway was that there couldn't be IEDs, mines or anything like that because it was too obvious. We were trapped in the middle of the road with nowhere to go. It was open ground, which you can't run across."

The Gurkhas had fallen into a common Taliban tactical trap known as a Vulnerable Point where ISAF soldiers were confronted with potential roadside bombs before they were attacked by insurgents: "It was really nice ground for the enemy so all of a sudden we were heavily smashed by them with a massive amount of gunfire."

Initially forced into a shallow ditch by the road, Limbu and his section were attacked by bullets and even a rocket-propelled grenade. Surrounded by rising dust, smoke and gunfire, the Gurkhas needed to find cover and eventually received support. The Taliban retreated into the buildings while Limbu and his comrades took control of the engagement: "We began to fight back and we won it. The enemy shot at us and we shot back but it was very hard to hit anything because you are pumped up in battle."

An ISAF fighter plane eventually dropped munition onto the Taliban's position, which killed the insurgents or forced them to retreat. Throughout this intense battle, Limbu was reminded of what day it was: "In my mind I kept thinking, 'Today is my birthday!'"

The hill

By October 2008, Limbu was still operating in Garmsir district from FOB Delhi. His section was performing another clear-and-search operation almost 16km into Taliban territory with the daunting task of taking an occupied hill from the insurgents. The hill was being used as an attack base by the Taliban and also contained snipers.

The Gurkhas were about to launch a second attempt to take the hill from a nearby compound and Limbu, who had recently lost a close friend in action, wanted to take the fight to the enemy. "It was a small hill into the desert and we had lost our friend a few weeks back," he says. "He was my numberi (contemporary colleague) who I had joined the army with. He had been killed in open ground, which is exactly what we now had to go into. Our dearest numberi was in my mind and I really wanted to engage."

Despite his eagerness for battle, Limbu still had to plan carefully: "I wanted to move really fast and kill the Taliban before they killed us. We had to move fast but nevertheless at a speed where we wouldn't shoot incorrectly. When we ran into open fields in front of the hill we had to focus. I was thinking of who would be the first to lead ahead and was looking left and right for my team. When I was at the front I was thinking, 'In this battle, I will be first.'"

In this dangerous situation, Limbu thought through his plan of attack with professional pragmatism. "I was fast and knew that the Taliban might hit my helmet, body-armour plating or my leg," he says. "However, I would be fine so long as they didn't hit me in the face. I was thinking, 'Whatever I see, I'm going to shoot' but I'm also going to use the rules of engagement."

With his section lined up, Limbu went into action: "All of a sudden we cleared off and when I looked right people began to run. This was always the 'combat indicator' – as soon as people see that we are running that means something is going to happen."

The Gurkhas began fighting as they ascended the hill: "As I climbed I just engaged. Bullets came down and we shot back. We began to climb into the hill and we were really pumped up. We didn't know what was going to happen but we were ready with our team. All of my team were really ready to smash them."

Limbu and his team climbed to the top of the hill under fire and even took cover in a trench that had been dug by the Taliban. During their ascent they discovered a secret hideout for enemy snipers: "We sent reconnaissance into the hill and found there was a cave slightly on our left where the Taliban used to sleep. Our friendly base was not very far

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Below: *Limbu pictured at Camp Bastion, Helmand Province, 2006*

Images: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd

A soldier of 2nd Battalion, Royal Gurkha Rifles practices a drill exercise with his kukri

A British Gurkha keeps watch while on foot patrol in a poppy field in Musa Qala, Helmand province March 28, 2009

© Alamy

"WE MADE IT SAFE AND ALWAYS TRIED TO HELP CIVILIANS AND REASSURE THEM. THAT WAS OUR JOB. WE NEVER STARTED FIGHTS: THE TALIBAN ATTACKED US, TRIED TO KILL US – AND WE KILLED THEM"

Limbu pictured while conducting a long-range vehicle tour in Balkh Province during his first tour in Afghanistan in 2002

Images: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd

Limbu pictured wearing RGR Officers' Mess Kit at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick in 2019

Images: Kailash Limbu and Michael O'Mara Books Ltd

British Gurkhas fire mortars at Taliban fighters from FOB Delhi, January 2008

© Getty

from that position and the Taliban used sniper rifles to gaze over the base every single day." Despite the Taliban's cunning use of terrain, the Gurkhas were ultimately victorious: "We overran and took the hill while they ran back afraid."

"We made it safe"

As a member of the ISAF, Limbu fought the Taliban many times during his tours of Afghanistan. While he recognised their fighting ability, he is also clear that they were no match for the Gurkhas: "As soldiers, I respected them. They were fearless fighters and moved fast. This was perhaps because they were not carrying as much weight as us and moved quickly with just a few rounds of ammunition and a rifle. However, we were better soldiers and they couldn't defeat us because we were the better fighters."

The Taliban were, and remain, a formidable military force to be reckoned with in Afghanistan but their often brutal tactics have frequently caused misery for Afghan civilians. Limbu was sympathetic to a gracious population who had to endure frequent intimidation by the Taliban. "The civilians I came across were really friendly," he says. "Some of them were not because they were perhaps scared of the insurgents. This was because when we left them the Taliban would perhaps punish them, but most were friendly and helpful. I felt sorry for them because when we arrived they were helpful to us but we could turn back, whereas they had to encounter whoever came to their town or village. Nevertheless, most were very nice people."

On 11 September 2021, American troops will finally withdraw from Afghanistan. This will symbolically be 20 years since the September 11 attacks in the United States that triggered the conflict. It is the longest war in America's history, but with the Taliban still active the outcome of the war – and the future of Afghanistan – remains uncertain.

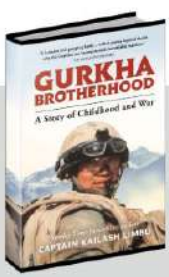
British combat troops were withdrawn in 2014, although Limbu's last tour was in 2016 when 2 RGR participated in Operation Toral – NATO's mission to train and assist Afghan government security forces against the Taliban. When asked what the British armed forces achieved in Afghanistan, Limbu maintains that their military presence was well intentioned and helped civilians: "I'm not that qualified to give an answer but whatever we did was to support the local people. We helped the Afghan people and were just there to try to make things better. I know it was a long, long deployment but certainly when we were there we made it a better place. We made it safe and always tried to help civilians and reassure them. That was our job. We never started fights: the Taliban attacked us, tried to kill us – and we killed them."

A unique bond

Limbu was subsequently commissioned as an officer in 2018 and continues to serve as a captain in 2 RGR. His current role involves training Gurkha recruits at the military base of Catterick in North Yorkshire, which is the British Army's largest garrison. "I look after three platoons right now," he says. "In my 'wing' I have 100 young Gurkha soldiers and look after them. I've been doing this job for the past three years. It's an honour to be here in the training establishment and to pass on my expert knowledge to the younger people. It's a fantastic place."

Alongside his military career, Limbu has also become a writer. His first book, *Gurkha: Better to Die than Live a Coward*, was published in 2015 and became a Sunday Times Top Ten Bestseller. His latest book, *Gurkha Brotherhood: A Story of Childhood and War,* recounts his childhood in Nepal and his military operations in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan.

As the title suggests, the bond between Limbu and his fellow Gurkhas remains unbreakable: "It means a lot and we look out for each other. For example, if something happened to me I've got no doubt that the members of my team would look after me. My brothers will look after me – that's how I feel. Also, if I was moved for deployment right now I've got no issue for my family because I know they will be cared for. This is the kind of trust and bond we have got and I believe that as long as we have unity then everything is possible. That's why the brotherhood we have is unique. Everything we do, we do it purposefully together as Gurkha brothers."



Kailash Limbu is the author of *Gurkha Brotherhood: A Story of Childhood and War*, which is published by Michael O'Mara Books Limited. To purchase a copy visit:

www.mombooks.com

GATO-CLASS SUBMARINE

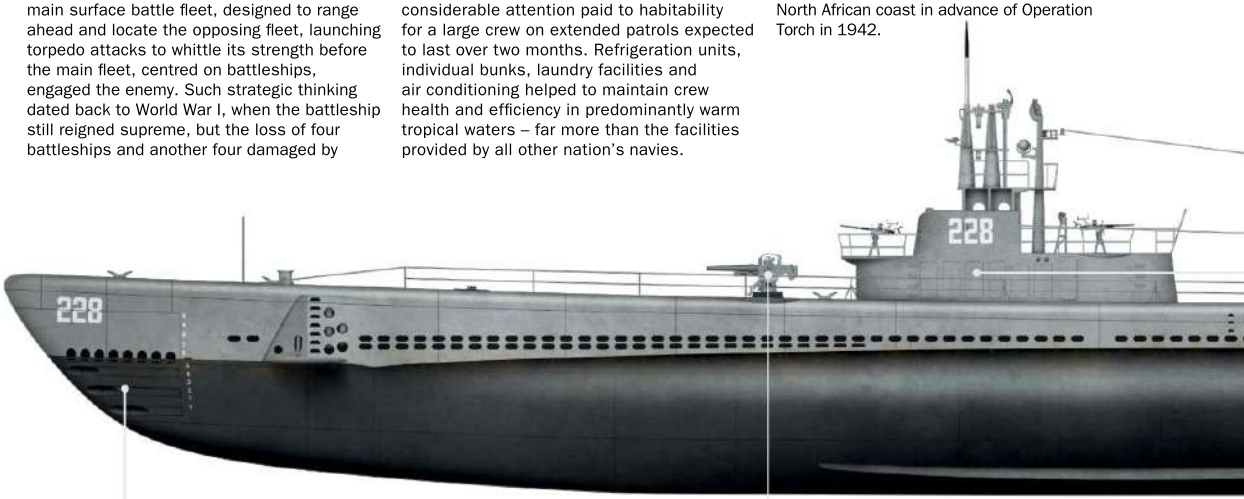
An archaic design principle yielded what soon became one of the US Navy's best and most successful submarine types

WORDS **LARRY PATERSON**

The Gato Class (and its slightly improved Balao derivative built from 1942 onwards) marked the high point of the US Navy's desire for a 'Fleet Submarine'. Conceptually, this placed these large ocean-going vessels as scouting elements for a main surface battle fleet, designed to range ahead and locate the opposing fleet, launching torpedo attacks to whittle its strength before the main fleet, centred on battleships, engaged the enemy. Such strategic thinking dated back to World War I, when the battleship still reigned supreme, but the loss of four battleships and another four damaged by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 forced an urgent reappraisal of the US Navy's Pacific doctrine.

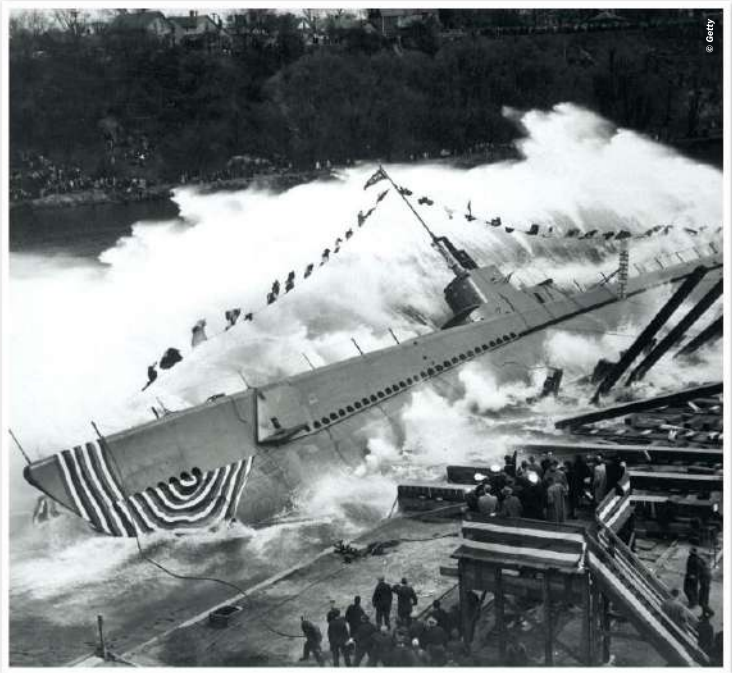
Thanks to its intended use being to accompany a main battle fleet at sea, the Gato was a large ocean-going submarine, heavily armed and designed with considerable attention paid to habitability for a large crew on extended patrols expected to last over two months. Refrigeration units, individual bunks, laundry facilities and air conditioning helped to maintain crew health and efficiency in predominantly warm tropical waters – far more than the facilities provided by all other nation's navies.

USS Drum was the premier Gato boat commissioned on 1 November 1941. It was the first of 77 to be commissioned by April 1944, carrying the brunt of the US Navy's submarine war in the Pacific, while a small number were also used within the Atlantic, most notably as reconnaissance off the North African coast in advance of Operation Torch in 1942.



21-INCH TORPEDO TUBES
The Gato was armed with ten torpedo tubes, six towards the bow and four towards the stern. These tubes could also deploy mines but often suffered malfunctions and jamming.

DECK GUNS
The Gato was heavily armed, not just for submerged attack, but also while surfaced. Anti-aircraft cannons, and in the later stages of the war even a 5-inch deck cannon were installed.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Above: View of the launch of the US Navy submarine USS Robalo, at Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, 9 May 1943. Note the sideways slide of the vessel into the water, necessitated by its launch into the Manitowoc River

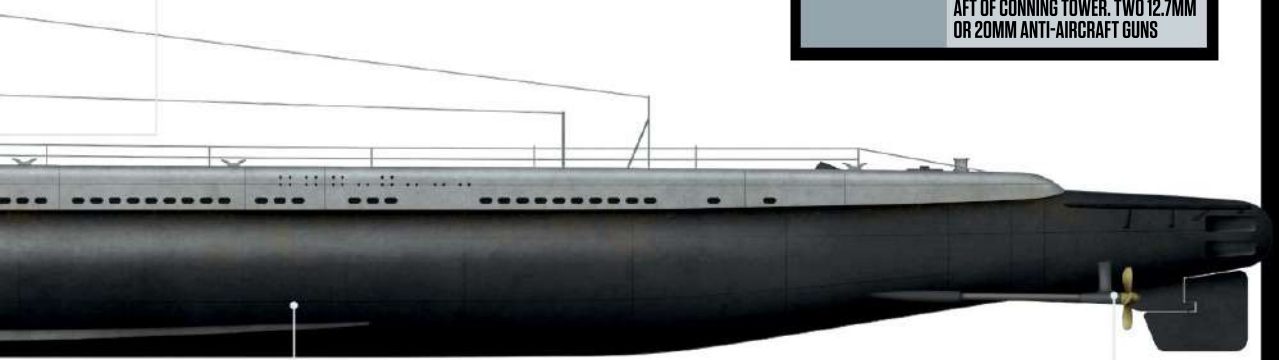
© Alamy

USS Wahoo departs Mare Island Naval yard after overhaul before its sixth war patrol. It was sunk with all hands on its seventh mission

GATO CLASS SUBMARINE

COMMISSIONED	1940
ORIGIN	USA
LENGTH	95M (311 FT, 9 INCHES)
BEAM	8.31M (27 FT, 3 INCHES)
DISPLACEMENT	1,525 TONS (SURFACED)
RANGE	11, 800 NAUTICAL MILES @ 10 KNOTS SURFACED 95 NAUTICAL MILES @ 5 KNOTS SUBMERGED
MACHINERY	FOUR GM OR FAIRBANKS MORSE DIESELS DRIVING ELECTRIC GENERATORS FOUR ELLIOT OR GENERAL ELECTRIC HIGH-SPEED MOTORS
SPEED	20.5 KNOTS SURFACED, 9 KNOTS SUBMERGED
CREW	60-80 MEN
TEST DEPTH	90 METRES (300 FEET)
PRIMARY WEAPON	10 X 533MM (21-INCH) TORPEDO TUBES; SIX FORWARD, FOUR AFT
SECONDARY WEAPON	(VARIABLE) ONE 76MM (3-INCH)/50 CALIBRE DECK GUN, OR 127MM (5-INCH) DECK GUN EITHER MOUNTED FOR OR AFT OF CONNING TOWER. TWO 12.7MM OR 20MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS

CONNING TOWER
Positioned in the mid-front section of the deck, and was heavily modified with anti-aircraft guns and other armament to counter the Japanese aerial threat.



INTERIOR
Up to around 60 crew members would be crammed inside the submarine, including all provisions to remain at sea for weeks and even months at a time.

"THE GATO WAS A LARGE OCEAN-GOING SUBMARINE, HEAVILY ARMED AND DESIGNED WITH CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO HABITABILITY FOR A LARGE CREW"

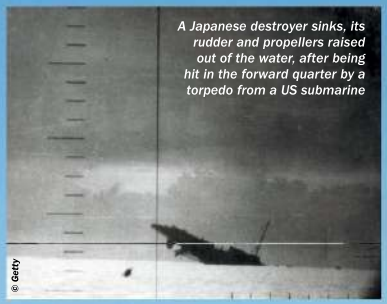
DIESEL-ELECTRIC ENGINE
Four diesel engines, powering four electric generators, served as the propulsion and power plant for the Gato. These enabled one or more of the engines to be shut down if repairs or maintenance were required.

Illustration: Battlefield Design

ARMAMENT

Gato's primary weapon was the 21-inch torpedo. The six bow tubes and four stern tubes provided great offensive power, the boat also carrying 14 reloads. Unfortunately, the US Navy suffered severe torpedo malfunctions because of inept research and testing, akin to that suffered by the Kriegsmarine, and not fully resolved until the end of 1943. The Gato boats could also carry 40 moored mines for deployment by torpedo tube. Above decks, two positions were available for a main cannon, up-gunned from 3-inch to 5-inch as the war progressed, and frequently used in action against small Japanese sailing vessels. Likewise, anti-aircraft positions changed along with frequently developing conning tower configurations as greater calibre weapons became available, and the Japanese aerial threat grew through increasing surfaced actions as the Japanese merchant fleet was decimated, becoming reliant on small transport vessels.

The upgraded 5-inch deck gun mounted on the foredeck of USS Drum, frequently used in surface actions within the Pacific



A Japanese destroyer sinks, its rudder and propellers raised out of the water, after being hit in the forward quarter by a torpedo from a US submarine

© Getty

Stern torpedo tubes

© Alamy

© Alamy

© Getty

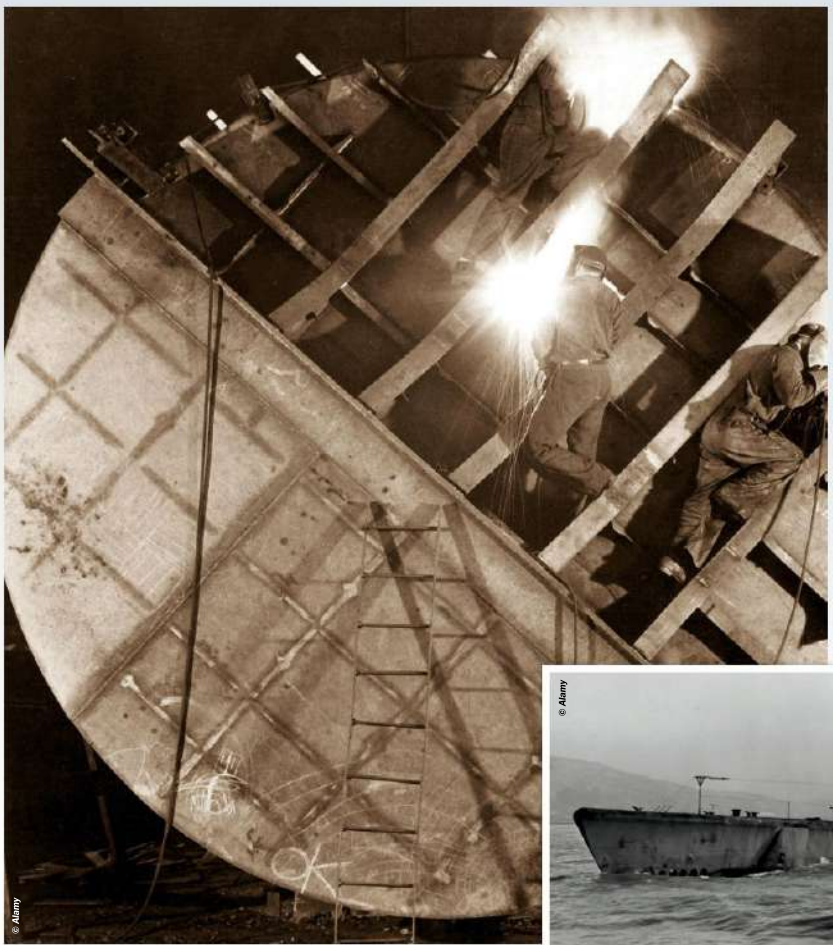
American singer Kate Smith (1907-86) paints the message 'To Hitler from Kate' on the side of a torpedo at a US Navy submarine base in New London, Connecticut, circa 1943

ENGINES

Gato submarines were driven by a diesel-electric drive, ie. diesel combustion engines. They were not connected to the shafts, but instead charged generators, providing energy for either loading batteries or powering the electric motors coupled to the propellor shafts at all times through reduction gears. Pioneered by the Swedish Navy during the early 20th century, this eliminated the former 'parallel' diesel or electric drive system in which electric motors for submerged use and diesel for surfaced were coupled to the same shaft; the motor used as a generator while surfaced, diesel disconnected while submerged. Although with some disadvantages, such as a decrease in diesel fuel efficiency by conversion to electrical output, the advantages included reduction in external noise by isolating diesels from the shafts, ship speed independent of diesel speed allowing optimised engine use, and flexibility in diesel engine positioning.

Engine room aboard USS Silversides

© Alamy



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DESIGN

Gato was comprised of an entirely welded partial double-hull construction, the inner pressure hull covered by a hydrodynamic outer casing with which it merged at either tapered end. Between the two lay six ballast tanks and four fuel bunkers. Internally the boat was subdivided into eight watertight compartments, the pressure hull thickness of 14.3mm was later increased to 22.2mm using a newly developed high-tensile steel alloy, resulting in the related Balao Class, capable of an increased test depth of 140 metres (400 feet). The Gato possessed a large, frequently modified conning tower configuration that contributed to a slow diving time – unacceptable if in action, such as with the fast-moving Atlantic convoy battles, but adequate for the Pacific.

***Left:** Welders working on the hull of a new submarine at the Electric Boat Company, Groton, Connecticut, August 1943*

***Below:** USS Barb (SS-220) in action in May 1945*

© Alamy

Recruitment poster for the US Navy 'Silent Service'. Twenty-nine Gato/Balao boats were lost during the war – 70 per cent of all American submarine casualties

Main control room aboard the museum boat, USS Drum

INTERIOR

The pressure hull interior placed great emphasis on crew habitability, including the use of air conditioning, which was luxurious in comparison to other navies. However, bearing in mind that the Pacific was the likely theatre of war for the US Navy, as well as maintaining crew comfort within an interior that could reach sweltering heat levels in tropical sea, air conditioning also reduced humidity that could coalesce into condensation and cause dangerous electrical shorts. Refrigerated food storage and a Kleinschmidt fresh-water distillation plant supplied provisions for long-distance patrols, and an excellent Torpedo Data Computer provided accurate firing solutions, though often rendered futile by malfunctioning torpedoes until defects were rectified.

SERVICE HISTORY

The Gato Class – an improved Balao – was a continuation of tried and tested Fleet Submarine designs that allowed the US Navy to take the fight to the Japanese mainland. American submarines generally operated independently in radio silence while at sea rather than using the Kriegsmarine's 'Wolf Pack' approach. The lessons of radar direction finder technology and code-breaking that destroyed German U-boat hopes were not lost on American naval commanders, and the nature of the Pacific war differed to the Atlantic. Japan did not employ convoying on anywhere near a European scale and, despite unrestricted submarine warfare being employed against Japan from the opening of hostilities, targets were fewer, frequently smaller and far more geographically spread than within the Atlantic. Nonetheless, the second most successful American submarine of the war was Gato-class USS Flasher, which sank 21 Japanese ships totalling 100,231 tonnes. The top ten scoring submarines were all either Gato or the improved Balao Class boats.

By the war's end the Gato Class was largely obsolete and superfluous. Two vessels received modernisation before being transferred to the Italian Navy, serving right up until 1973. The final two US Navy Gato boats were finally decommissioned in September 1969.

© Alamy

***Right:** Conning tower of one of the most successful American submarines, USS Silversides, now on display in Muskegon, Michigan*

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

***Above:** USS Finback rescuing downed pilot Lt (j.g.) George H W Bush, from his ditched Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bomber, damaged during a bombing mission at Chichi-Jima in September 1944*

USS Barb departing Pearl Harbour, on 8 June 1945 for its twelfth war patrol

© Alamy

"AMERICAN SUBMARINES GENERALLY OPERATED INDEPENDENTLY IN RADIO SILENCE WHILE AT SEA RATHER THAN USING THE KRIEGSMARINE'S 'WOLF PACK' APPROACH"

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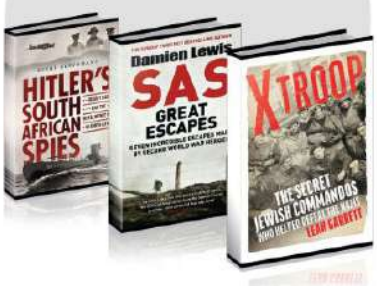

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Artefact of War: Charles V's pistol

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover Northern Ireland's wartime museum, the recently reopened St Michael's Mount and an African WWII veteran's new foundation to improve lives in his home country

Pride of Ghana

WWII veteran and Covid-19 fundraiser Joseph Ashitey Hammond has launched a new non-profit foundation that commemorates Ghana's military history and organises community projects

Popularly known as Private Hammond, Joseph Ashitey Hammond is a 96-year-old Ghanaian WWII veteran who served with the British Fourteenth Army in Burma. A mechanic in the Gold Coast Regiment, Hammond was one of approximately 100,000 Africans who fought for the British Empire during the war and personally saw extensive action against the Japanese. Hammond made headlines in 2020 when he raised over £40,000 for charity during the Covid-19 pandemic. Inspired by the fundraising efforts of fellow Burma veteran Captain Sir Tom Moore, Hammond was himself awarded a Commonwealth Points of Light Award and promoted to the honorary rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 by the Ghanaian Armed Forces.

Showing no signs of slowing down, Hammond remains committed to contributing to society and has established a new non-profit organisation called the Joseph Ashitey Hammond Foundation. The Foundation seeks to identify and confront problems in Ghana and Africa, raise awareness and provide solutions. It has also partnered with the UK-based Black Poppy Rose non-profit organisation and the Ghanaian Parables animation studios to preserve the heritage of Ghana. This specifically commemorates those who have fought for Ghana's freedom, with the theme History, Heritage, Legacy & Remembrance.

A programme of events will begin on 4 August 2021 and climax with the official launch of the Foundation on 4 September. Activities within this four-week period include a screening of an animation titled *28th: The Crossroad*, which tells the story of the Accra Riots – a veterans' march that inadvertently sparked the movement for Ghanaian independence in 1948. Hammond is the last surviving veteran of the riots and will deliver a talk after the screening of a short documentary. There will also be an exhibition of artefacts dating back to the 19th century that tells the story of the West African forces and regiments that fought for the British Empire.

As part of his new work for the Foundation, Hammond has additionally begun a water and sanitation project. He recently visited communities in Accra with the popular Ghanaian singer Gasmilla to assess hygiene facilities in the capital. Gasmilla has already partnered with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly to make the capital cleaner, while Hammond has embarked on a public awareness campaign called Operation Clear Up.

With these wide-ranging activities of remembrance and community projects, Hammond sums up the aims of the Foundation as follows: "If we are part of the problem then we should be part of the solution. I want to play my part to make this world a better place to live in."

For more information about the Foundation visit: www.hammondfoundationgh.org or follow it on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (@pte_hammond)

***Below:** Hammond was given his Commonwealth Points of Light Award for walking 23km at the age of 95 to raise money to combat the Covid-19 pandemic*

***Left:** Hammond and his nephew Joshua pictured with Selena Carty, founder of Black Poppy Rose, a British organisation dedicated to commemorating the military sacrifices of African and Caribbean people*

***Left:** Promotional stills for 28th: The Crossroads, an animated film that the tells the story of the Accra Riots in 1948*

Images: Joseph Ashitey Hammond Foundation and Forces Help Africa

Wartime Ulster

The Northern Ireland Memorial Museum commemorates the province's contribution to WWII and houses several military charities

With the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland this year, much of the province's 100-year history has been dominated by the sectarian conflict that raged during the 1960s-90s. Nevertheless, Ulster was also heavily affected by WWII. While Southern Ireland remained neutral, the north fought as part of the UK, with 38,000 Northern Irish people joining the British armed forces. Belfast was heavily blitzed, with thousands of casualties and extensive damage to the city. The US Army also arrived in large numbers during 1942-44 and established many bases across the six counties.

This story is remembered at the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum (NIWM), which is situated in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter. It displays a unique collection relating to the blitz, the American forces, Ulster Home Guard, wartime industry and the role of women. Its collection contains thousands of fascinating objects, from artworks and uniforms to photographs and radios. The centrepiece of the museum is the Memorial Wall and plinth, which contains two Rolls of Honour that name all those from Northern Ireland who died serving in both World Wars.

In line with its additional mission to assist ex-servicemen and women, the NIWM's building also houses the Northern Ireland offices of the SSAFA Armed Forces Charity, Combat Stress and Help for Heroes. It provides free access to its boardroom and conference room to all ex-service bodies as well as being a charitable output.

The NIWM holds regular events, including open days and tours. For more information visit: www.niwarmemorial.org

***Above:** African American soldiers of the US Army distribute food rations at their base in Northern Ireland*

The Northern Ireland War Memorial Building was originally built on an area of Belfast that had been destroyed by German bombing raids

Cornwall's Fortified Island

The spectacular St Michael's Mount has a long military history and is gradually reopening to visitors

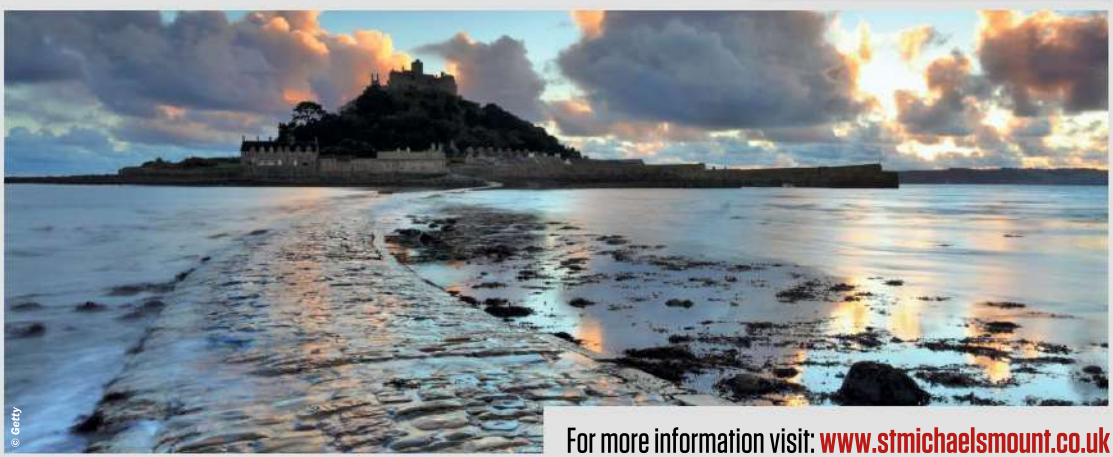
St Michael's Mount recently made headlines in the British press when its owners, the St Aubyn family, advertised for a live-in manager for their castle on the Cornish coast. A tidal island off Marazion, St Michael's Mount is one of Cornwall's most famous heritage attractions. It has been the home of the St Aubyn family since the mid-1600s and has a unique military history alongside its magnificent setting.

Originally founded as a monastery, the Mount was gradually fortified and endured long sieges during the Wars of the Roses and the First English Civil War. It was reinforced with pillboxes during WWII and high-ranking Nazi Joachim von Ribbentrop even wanted to live there after a successful invasion of Britain.

Although the St Aubyn family still reside on the Mount, it's now largely owned by the National Trust. In line with the easing of UK restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, the island is re-opening on a gradual basis to manage visitor numbers on the island and mainland. All visitors must book tickets online and there are a range of options to choose from, including group tickets for organised groups and education visits. Castle and garden tickets are separate but there is also a Combi option to incorporate both. The National Trust is releasing tickets for the Mount in timed blocks, so consult the website below for available dates.

The northwest cannon battery of St Michael's Mount overlooks Marazion

***Below:** St Michael's Mount was an inspiration for John Milton and J. M. W. Turner and has been a film location for Dracula, Never Say Never Again and Johnny English*



For more information visit: www.stmichaelsmount.co.uk

WWII THIS MONTH...

JULY 1941

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

VICTORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By early July the Syrian-Lebanon Campaign was drawing to a conclusion, with Vichy forces defeated at Palmyra on 1 July, before the garrison of Beirut surrendered on 12 July. The campaign involved a large contingent from the Australian 7th Division, as well as Indian, Free French and British troops. It's estimated that Australian casualties numbered 416 killed and 1,136 wounded, while approximately 1,000 Vichy French troops were killed during the campaign.

© Getty

Left: Georges Catroux and the Duke of Gloucester in Beirut, July 1941. At the end of the Syrian-Lebanon Campaign the region was handed back to the Free French forces under Charles de Gaulle.

© Alamy

ANGLO-SOVIET AGREEMENT

Soviet factory workers read the news of Britain and the USSR's agreement to cooperate in the war against Germany, signed 12 July. In response to Hitler's invasion, Winston Churchill had exclaimed: "If Hitler invaded Hell, I would at least make a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons." The newfound alliance soon saw the Prime Minister and Stalin exchanging correspondence on the progress of the war. Materiel support from Britain to the USSR began in the form of the Arctic convoys, which commenced the following month.

© Getty

BATTLE OF BIAŁYSTOK-MINSK

During Operation Barbarossa, Army Group Centre's first thrust was towards the cities of Białystok, Poland, and Minsk, Byelorussia. The German attack involved 3rd and 2nd Panzer Groups, whose swift advance surrounded four Soviet armies, creating large pockets of encircled Red Army troops. By 9 July, these pockets were closed and thousands of Red Army soldiers captured. Pictured are the remains of a Red Army convoy, destroyed by a German air raid in the Białystok area. As a result of the disaster during the Battle of Białystok-Minsk, General Dmitry Pavlov, in command of the Western Front, was executed for treason.

© Alamy

THE WAR CONTINUES

Finnish soldiers move through woodland during the reconquest of the Karelian isthmus and area around Lake Ladoga. In the wake of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Finland renewed its conflict with the USSR, at first fending off air attacks before advancing into territory that had been ceded to the Soviets after the Winter War. With support from Germany, the Finnish advance eventually drove the Red Army out of the Karelian isthmus. This was the start of the Continuation War, which continued beyond the surrender of Nazi Germany, ending in September 1944.

Source: Wiki / Public Domain / Military Museum of Finland

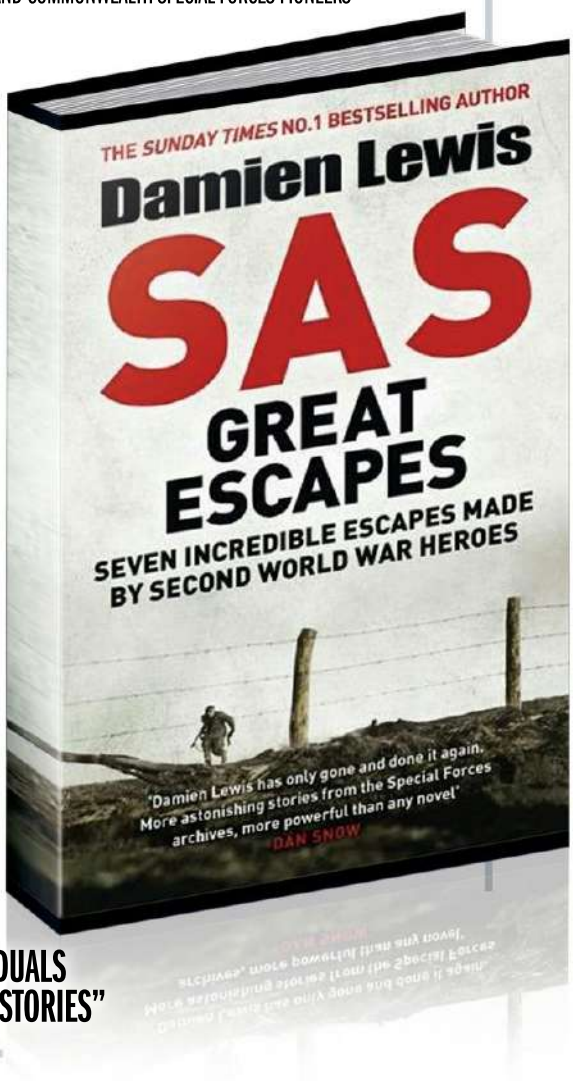
REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

SAS GREAT ESCAPES

SEVEN SECOND WORLD WAR ESCAPE ODYSSEYS CARRIED OUT BY BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH SPECIAL FORCES PIONEERS

Author: Damien Lewis **Publisher:** Quercus **Price:** £20


THE SUNDAY TIMES NO.1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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SAS
GREAT ESCAPES
SEVEN INCREDIBLE ESCAPES MADE BY SECOND WORLD WAR HEROES
"Damien Lewis has only gone and done it again. More astonishing stories from the Special Forces archives, more powerful than any novel"
DAN SNOW

The foundation story of Britain's Special Air Service Regiment by David Stirling in the Second World War's North African campaign is well-known. Breaking with tradition, Stirling set out to recruit officers and men who didn't fit into the rigid structure of the British Army – men who were often viewed by their superiors as oddballs, basket cases and troublemakers. Then, under the guiding hand of Stirling's right-hand man and chief instructor, John Steel 'Jock' Lewes, the selected personnel were trained in everything from explosives to unarmed combat, but most of all how to survive under all conditions and think for themselves.

The result was a body of men with an ethos like no other unit at the time, who went on to create mayhem and havoc across the desert and much of western Europe. Usually operating far behind enemy lines, and with little if any support, it was inevitable that some would either end up being captured or stranded and alone. In such circumstances many soldiers would accept their fate and wait out the war in captivity – not so the men of the SAS. Using his detailed and expert knowledge of Britain's special forces in the Second World War, and incredible access to surviving family members, Lewis picks out seven remarkable individuals and takes the reader into their personal stories. Each one gets a chapter, with the action beginning in Fascist Italy on Operation Colossus – the first ever airborne raid by British troops – before shifting to North Africa, Greece, back to Italy once more and ending in France. Along the way Lewis introduces us to some truly incredible characters. Men such as Roy Farran, a Donegal-born adventurer who built his own DIY water still on a Greek caique to save him and his men from dying of thirst; or John 'Gentleman Jim' Almonds, whose dreadful experiences as a prisoner of the Italians in Benghazi convinced him never to submit to capture again; and – perhaps most memorably – Corporal Jack Byrne, who walked alone across two hundred miles of some of the most unforgiving desert in the world equipped with just two litres of water, a tin of chocolate and some brandy.

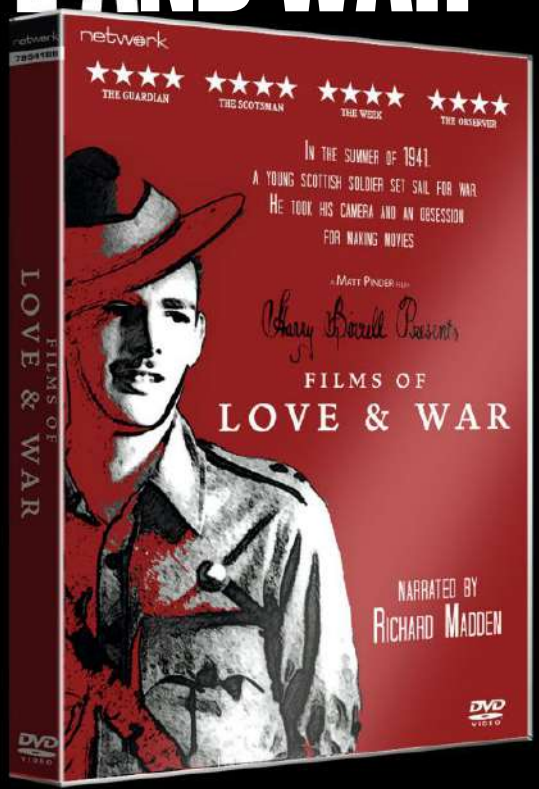
These men and their exploits are reason enough to enjoy *SAS Great Escapes*, but Lewis makes it more than just a series of boy's-own tales by weaving into the book the courage of the men and women who helped the escapees, providing them with shelter, food and comfort while putting their own lives at terrible risk. For Lieutenant George Paterson – a strapping six-foot three Canadian trekking his way north through Italy to neutral Switzerland after jumping from a moving train packed with hundreds of POWS – it was the Riccini family near Milan who furnished him with new clothes. And for Thomas Langton it was the incredible generosity of the desert Senussi tribespeople who unsparingly shared the little food they had with him and his comrades after their raid on Italian-occupied Tobruk. All in all this is a fascinating, action-packed read full of very human stories. **JT**

"LEWIS PICKS OUT SEVEN REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS AND TAKES THE READER INTO THEIR PERSONAL STORIES"

HARRY BIRRELL PRESENTS FILMS OF LOVE AND WAR

AN ORDINARY SOLDIER'S DIARIES AND CAMERA FOOTAGE REVEAL HIS ADVENTURES IN WWII AND LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER THE CONFLICT

Director: Matt Pinder Narrated by: Richard Madden



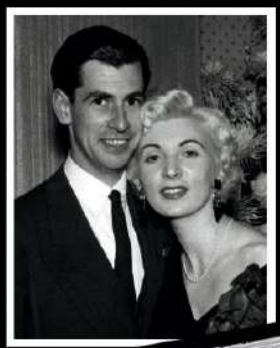
Harry Birrell frankly admitted that during his months of training "all the glamour of war was knocked out of me". The soldier penned these words in one of several diaries he kept during World War II, and the reason he wrote was simple – to preserve something of his adventures in case he was killed in action. While the diaries are revealing in themselves, Birrell left another legacy that's even more stunning and immediate. During his lifetime, he filmed more than 400 reels of camera footage depicting vistas of his youth, adventures from boyhood to adolescence, and the sometimes startling drama of military service in India, Burma and Nepal.

Birrell died in 1993 at the age of 75 and his diaries and copious film archive were locked up in a family shed. Rarely screened through the years the vivid record, both colour and black-and-white, nevertheless convinced his granddaughter, Carina Birrell, to become an actress. Then in 2019 filmmaker Matt Pinder introduced a fascinating work, *Harry Birrell Presents Films of Love and War,* which made its debut at the Glasgow Film Festival that year and took the Audience Award.

The flickering images are poignant, nostalgic and captivating as they convey the joy of life and discovery, as well as the rigours of wartime far from home. Birrell's service in the British Army is documented with rare and raw footage – including command of a battalion of Gurkha soldiers and perilous missions behind Japanese lines. Planes sortie, soldiers shoot and scurry, and at times a grim reminder of the cost of war comes into stark view. Scenes at home depict family gatherings, glimpses of romance, and the beauty of Birrell's native Scotland as the camera further documents family life into the 1960s.

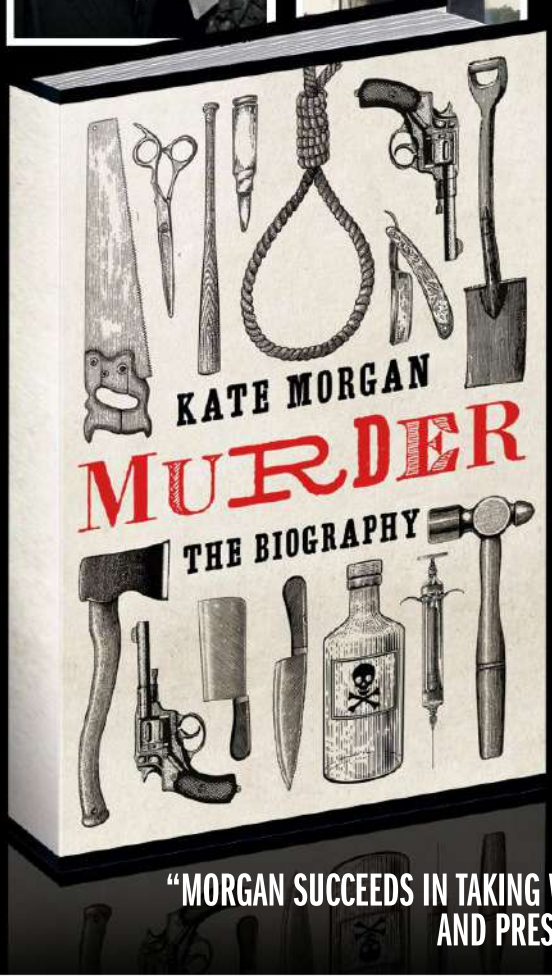
Narrated by Richard Madden, star of the *Bodyguard* television series, the film runs to 90 minutes and has recently been released on Blu-ray. Although its approach is less than linear, engendering a bit of timeline-related confusion, *Harry Birrell Presents Films of Love and War* is exceptional. It serves as an illuminating sojourn into days gone by, and a candid record of a young man's wartime experience and the sheer adventure of living. **MH**

ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDS



Below: The Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 was the largest single loss of life in London since WWII

Below, left: Hostess Ruth Ellis was hanged in 1955 for murdering her lover David Blakely



MURDER THE BIOGRAPHY

A GRUESOME BUT CONSTANTLY FASCINATING HISTORY OF MURDER

Author: Kate Morgan **Publisher:** Mudlark
Price: £16.99

Murder: The Biography is perhaps the most comprehensive history of murder that readers will have ever seen – it's hard to imagine how this remarkable book could be bettered in the future. Never salacious and far from sensationalist, *Murder: The Biography* is instead a gripping journey through the legal history of murder. The book is filled with chilling tales, from the starving crewmates who murdered and ate their ship's cabin boy under the now-outlawed defence of necessity to murder, to the still-controversial case of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in England, up to the recent tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire. Kate Morgan takes readers back through the centuries to discover exactly how and why the murder laws in the United Kingdom have reached their current status.

As a lawyer, Morgan is no doubt well-versed in the art of making a compelling argument and presenting an engaging case, and she has crafted an absolutely fascinating history in *Murder: The Biography*. What might have become a rather drab legal history is anything but, and by employing a vast canvas that takes in everything from corporate manslaughter to medical malpractice, self-defence and beyond, she crafts an all-encompassing and immensely readable work. Despite Morgan's legal expertise, this never becomes a legal textbook and instead she proves herself skilled at taking the most complex matters and turning them into a page-turning narrative.

Of course, it's inevitable that any book whose focus is on the crime of murder must contain a number of case studies to illustrate its narrative. Those readers of a squeamish nature may occasionally wince, but this book is a world away from the voyeuristic prurience that some works on true crime stray towards. There is no sense of tabloid sensationalism at all and Morgan describes the crimes analytically where necessary, but also with a great deal of compassion. Morgan also provides a lot of historical and societal context, which is invaluable when it comes to the sometimes shocking stories here. She makes sense of the many definitions of murder, as well as manslaughter and other associated charges too.

Morgan's book is not concerned with telling true crime stories so much as demonstrating how they have shaped and influenced the changes in the murder laws over centuries. It is clearly meticulously researched and written by an expert in the field, but Morgan succeeds in taking what could be complex or dry material and presenting it in a way that is anything but.

This is a book that deserves to find a large readership and will no doubt appeal to a wide audience. Whether readers are interested in legal history or true crime, or are simply looking for a compelling history that is both current, exceptionally readable and never less than enthralling, they will find much to admire in *Murder: The Biography*. **CC**

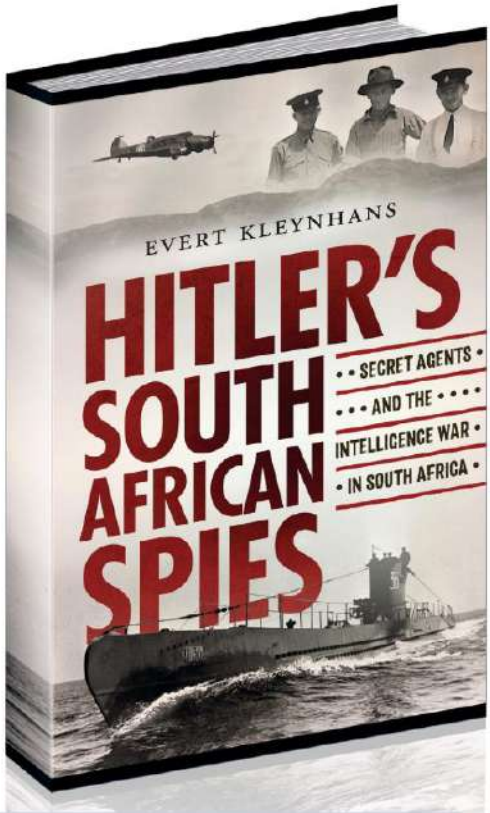
"MORGAN SUCCEEDS IN TAKING WHAT COULD BE COMPLEX OR DRY MATERIAL AND PRESENTING IT IN A WAY THAT IS ANYTHING BUT"

HITLER'S SOUTH AFRICAN SPIES

SECRET AGENTS AND THE INTELLIGENCE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

A SCHOLARLY INTRODUCTION TO AN OVERLOOKED ASPECT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

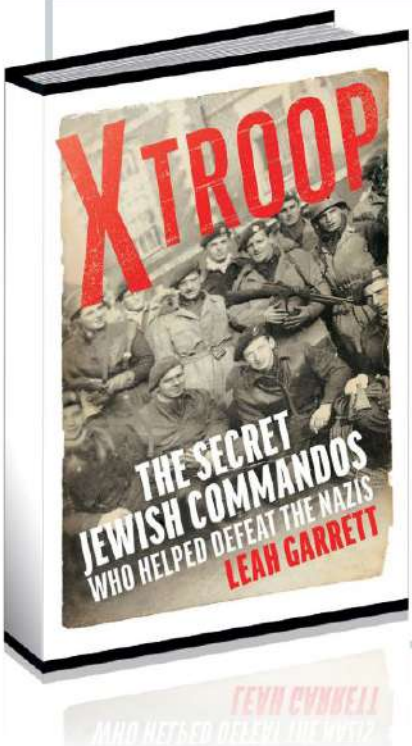
Author: Evert Kleynhans **Publisher:** Jonathan Ball Publishers
Price: £10.99



Books that take you into a neglected field of history are always welcome, and this work from Evert Kleynhans does just that. When people think of Africa in the Second World War, they think of North Africa, with Tobruk and El Alamein claiming top billing. But South Africa had a role to play as well, even if it was on a smaller scale.

Kleynhans details the formation and exploitation of German spy networks in the Union of South Africa. With anti-British sentiment strong in certain sections of South African society, there was plenty of sympathy for the Third Reich. The loss of their colonies in Africa in the First World War was still painful for the Germans, who saw a chance to rebuild their dreamed-of 'second fatherland' with the help of South African agitators. Add the fact that the sea lanes around South Africa were of vital importance to the Allied war effort and this was an important theatre of the war.

Kleynhans' book starts well, with a gripping account of U-boat activity in the waters off the South African coast. There is something of a lull as he lays the groundwork for the remainder of the story (although this showcases a deep level of research) but the book then picks up to reward the reader with more U-boat action (nearly 775,000 tons of merchant shipping was sunk in South African waters) and the traditional spy fare of border-crossings, secret passwords and invisible ink. An enjoyable and informative read. **DS**



X TROOP

THE STORY OF HOW JEWISH REFUGEES WHO ESCAPED TO BRITAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, BECAME SOLDIERS AND TOOK THE FIGHT BACK TO THEIR NAZI PERSECUTORS

Author: Leah Garrett **Publisher:** Chatto & Windus **Price:** £20

Among the most chilling images of Nazi wartime atrocities are those of the lines of Jewish captives awaiting execution by roadside ditches, usually dug by the condemned prisoners themselves. How could they resign themselves to such an ignominious fate, even in the face of certain death, and not fight back? The answer is, of course, many did. The month-long Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943 was a heroic saga of people who preferred to fight than be deported to death camps. Those who fought knew their uprising was doomed and their chances of survival were nil. When the revolt was finally crushed, 13,000 Jews had lost their lives, men and women who chose to pick the time and place of their death.

Leah Garrett tells the inspirational story of a commando unit formed in Britain by Jews who had escaped Nazi persecution in Germany and Austria. The idea to create this force came from Winston Churchill and his chief of staff Lord Mountbatten. "This was exactly the kind of plan that excited Churchill," says Garrett. "He told Mountbatten to pursue it and see if it was workable."

The unit was set up in July 1942 under the command of Colonel Dudley Lister, who put together a team of men from various countries of occupied Europe. The 'British troop', know as X Troop, was composed of German-speaking refugees. At the nadir of the Second World War, this group of Jewish commandos volunteered to fight on the front lines. The 87 men of X-Troop played a crucial role in the D-Day landings and killed, captured and interrogated their way across occupied Europe, into the heartland of the Reich. Garrett is to be commended for bringing to life this little-known tale of extraordinary wartime heroism by this group of Jewish refugees in the service of Britain. **JS**

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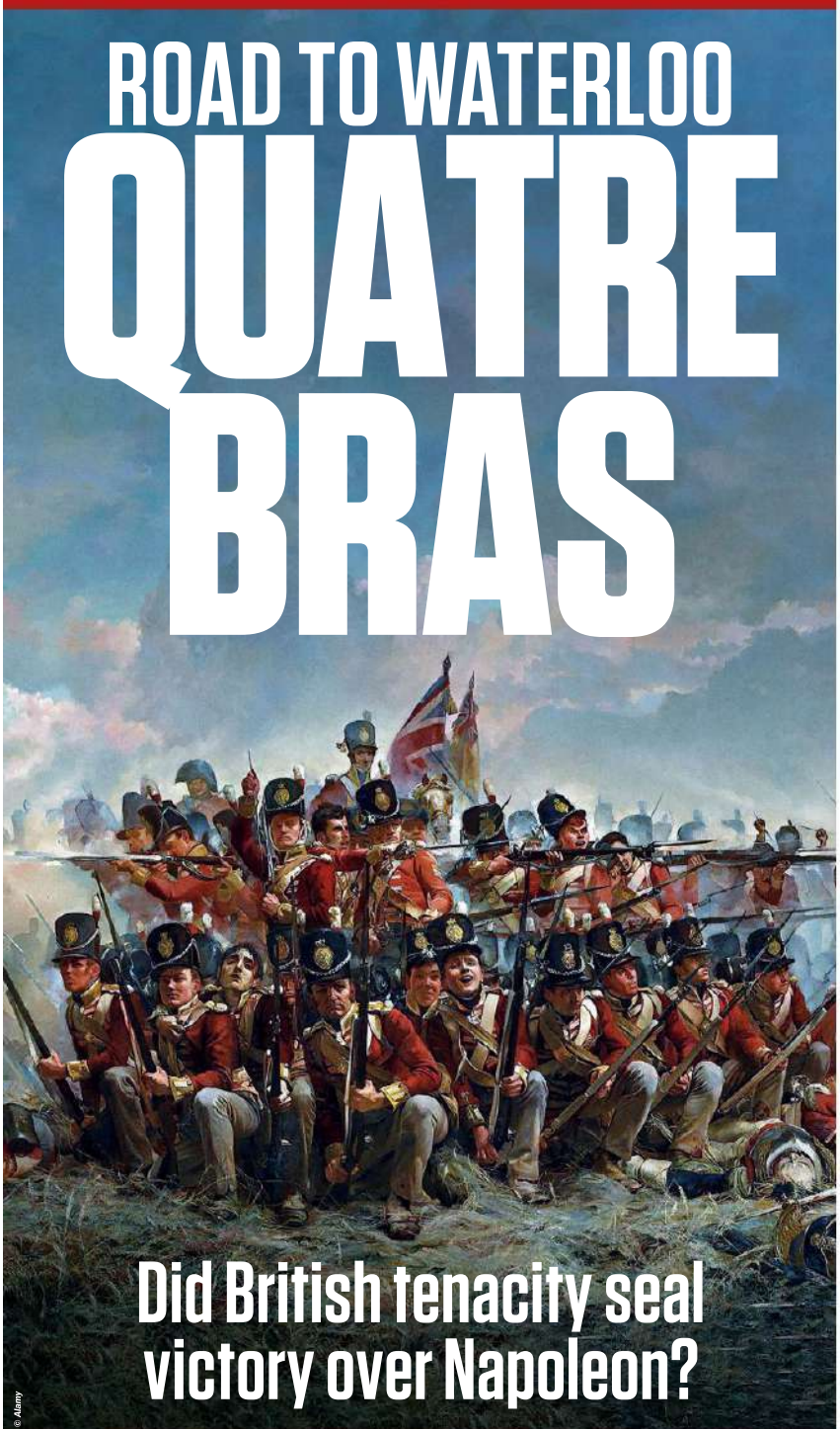

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Did British tenacity seal victory over Napoleon?

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HISTORY OF WAR

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor-in-Chief **Tim Williamson**
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com
Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**
Features Editor **Tom Garner**
Production Editor **Iain Noble**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Contributors
Catherine Curzon, Stuart Hadaway, Michael Haskew, Damien Lewis, Larry Paterson, David Smith, Jules Stewart, Jon Trigg

Photography
Alamy, Battlefield Design, Rocio Espin, Nicolas Forder, Getty

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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
UK Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Senior Advertising Manager **Matthew Johnston**
matthew.johnston@futurenet.com
07801 930735
Account Manager **Garry Brookes**
garry.brookes@futurenet.com
+44 020 3970 4176

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 2054-376X

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History of War, ISSN 2054-376X, is published 13 times a year (twice in October) by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA. UK The US annual subscription price is $171.60. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Brooklyn NY 11256. US POSTMASTER: Send address changes to History of War, World Container Inc, 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. UK

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CHARLES V'S PISTOL

The Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain owned this unique double-barrelled pistol that was produced at the dawn of firearms technology

One of the most powerful monarchs of all time, the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-58) ruled over much of Europe during the 16th century. His territories did not just include the Imperial heartlands of Germany but also Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, Burgundy, much of Italy and the new Spanish colonies in the Americas. A supremely wealthy man, Charles was able to afford the best military technology, not just for his armies but also for himself. This included a new invention: the pistol.

One of the earliest types of pistol was the wheellock. This was a firearm with a friction-wheel mechanism that created a spark to cause the pistol to fire. A major development from the matchlock pistol, the wheellock was developed in Europe around the year 1500 and was subjected to the first gun-control laws by Charles's predecessor Emperor Maximilian I during 1517-18. Its most likely inventor was a now-unknown German mechanic, although Leonardo da Vinci has also been suggested based on drawings he made in the 1490s and 1500s. Charles himself bought this pictured wheellock at some point between 1540-45 from a German gunsmith and watchmaker called Peter Peck.

Based in Munich, Peck made the elaborate double-barrelled pistol for Charles. Made of steel, gold, cherry wood and staghorn, the pistol's two wheel-locks are combined in one mechanism to provide the barrels with separate ignition. It is decorated with Charles's dynastic and personal emblems, including the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire, and the pillars of Hercules. It is also engraved with the emperor's Latin motto "PLUS ULTRA" ("More Beyond").

© Metropolitan Museum of Art

A shot from a wheellock pistol reportedly sparked the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, while another was used to assassinate William the Silent, Prince of Orange in 1584

Charles V's pistol is part of the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Known as The Met, the museum is the largest art museum in the United States and contains the popular Department of Arms and Armor.

THE MET

www.metmuseum.org

AIRFIX

1:48

CANADAIR SABRE F.4

A08109
CANADAIR SABRE F.4

On entering USAF service in 1949, the North American F-86 Sabre was not only America's first swept wing fighter, but also the fastest fighter in the world and one of the most important aircraft in the post war jet era. The Canadair Sabre was built under licence from North American Aviation for both the RCAF and the RAF. 428 Sabre F.4s were built for the RAF, equipping 11 Squadrons (mostly based in Germany) between 1952 and 1956.

CANADAIR SABRE F.4
No.3 Squadron, Royal Air Force Germany Geilenkirchen, 1954.

CANADAIR SABRE F.4
No.4 Squadron, Royal Air Force Germany Jever, 1954.

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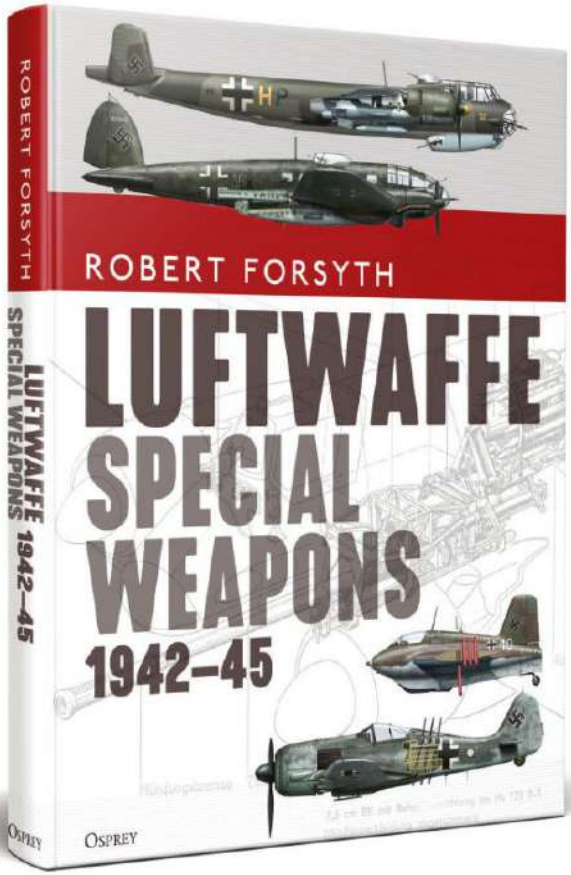
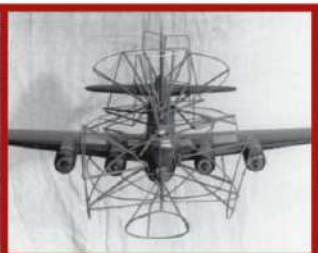


LUFTWAFFE SPECIAL WEAPONS 1942–45

In this highly illustrated book, Robert Forsyth examines the most innovative and unconventional weapons that comprised the Luftwaffe's increasingly potent arsenal developed to defend the Third Reich.



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